

OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

4-H Fabrics & Fashions

Home & Personal Living Space

The Principles of Design

The furnishings you select for your first apartment will require a combination of three basic elements – color, texture and form. Color and texture combinations are largely a matter of personal taste; however, you can get some good ideas about mixing and matching by visiting the furniture display rooms in your local department or furniture stores.

Although this lesson focuses mostly on form, all of the basic elements can be brought together most effectively throughout the application of the basic principles of design *proportion and balance*.

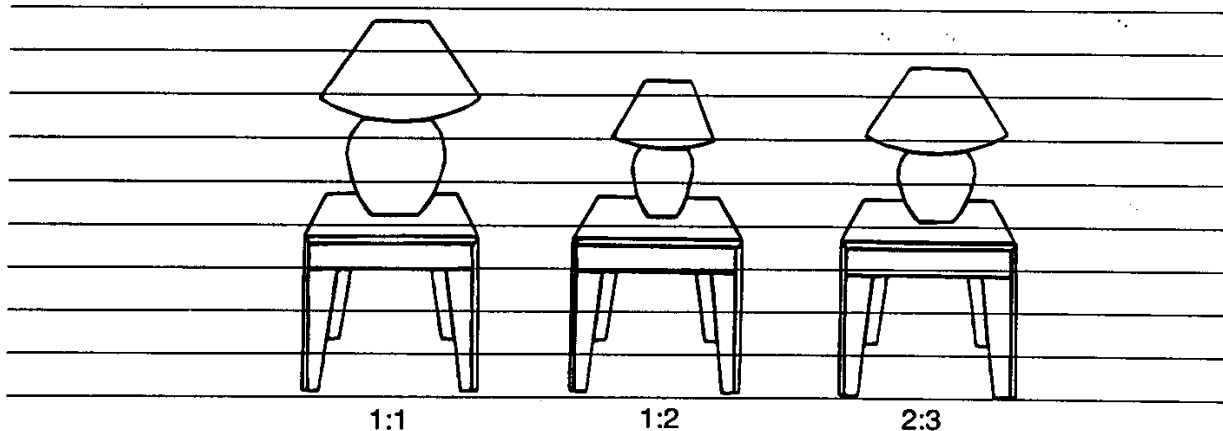
Proportion

How will the pieces of furniture and accessories relate to each other and to the room? Will their combined form and size create a pleasing combination? To assure they do, we must consider the principle of *proportion*.

Proportion is determined by the ratio in size of one piece to another as well as the ratio to the room as a whole. The forms of the various objects also play a part in proportion.

A coffee table that is the same length as a couch constitutes a 1:1 ratio as would a lamp of equal height to an end table. Ratios of 1:1 or 1:2 are considered to be of equal proportions and are generally not as appealing as unequal proportions such as 2:3 or 5:8.

Imagine a living room full of furniture with only a small aisle to pass through (1:1). This room would look small and overcrowded. Conversely, a room in which the furniture takes up only half of the floor space (1:2) would appear empty and uninviting. However, if the furniture fit into about two-thirds of the floor space, you would most likely feel comfortable and at home.



Balance

Will the furnishings chosen provide a sense of equilibrium? If so, the principle of balance has been applied. Balance can be either formal or informal, depending on the effect you are trying to achieve.

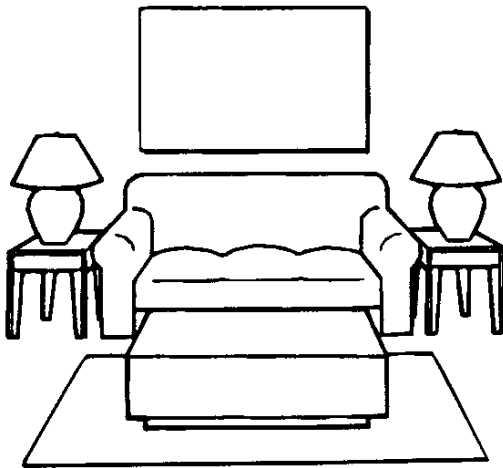
Formal balance will give a room a sophisticated and graceful look. In formal arrangements, identical furnishings are arranged in a symmetrical fashion. Centering a couch on the main wall in a living room and placing an identical table and lamp on each side will create formal balance in that room.

Informal balance can create a more interesting effect. For informal balance, choose furniture which varies in shape, size

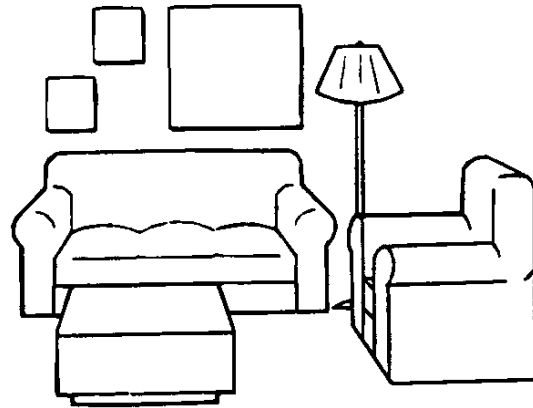
or color. A matching couch, love seat and armchair will create informal balance. Although the colors and textures are the same, the variation in size makes an asymmetrical setting. To further accentuate the area, use an end table with a lamp and a floor lamp.

A carefully placed area rug, whether over carpeting or a hardwood floor, can draw the whole area together to further achieve a sense of equilibrium.

You can combine formal and informal balance within a room as long as you consider the overall theme and let the appropriate form dominate.



Formal



Informal