

BATHROOMS :

GRAND AMBITION

ATTAIN SANCTUARY STATUS WITH A FEW SAVVY TECHNIQUES TO SIZE UP FROM LITTLE TO LUXE

WORDS SALLY PATERSON

OFTEN, THE *HOUSE RULES* teams don't have much room to play with when it comes to planning and designing new bathrooms for their fellow contestants' home. *Home Beautiful* has some sage advice to share: the washroom needn't be grand in scale to pack a punch. Sure, stand-out heroes like the freestanding stone bath or the two-metre double vanity might be noticeably absent from your list of inclusions, but a clever design will see to it that even the smallest of rooms can take on new dimensions in style and practicality.

TIP "A generously sized walk-in shower – possibly with a feature shelf niche – will win every time over squeezing in a tiny enclosed shower cubicle and short bath," suggests interior architect Andrew Waller of Andrew Waller Design.

Begin with a carefully drawn sketch that includes all your fittings and door clearances, mapped out to scale. Let the position of your entry door dictate the details, situating the toilet as discreetly out of view as possible, and highlighting the features that exude style and luxury. "Make sure there's a good focal point on entering the room," says interior architect Andrew Waller of Andrew Waller Design. Also, pare back the number of fittings and opt for fewer, more deluxe pieces with ample room to move in between. "Work to a minimum of 15cm on either side of the toilet and 70cm for front legroom, and ensure at least 85cm x 85cm for a shower," advises design manager Vanessa Cook of Smarter Bathrooms+. It's important to remember to allow for sufficient clearance of the entry door against other fittings, or even consider a cavity slider if space is just too tight.

"Try positioning the vanity within your main view – this will also maximise the mirror to visually enlarge the space"

~ Andrew Waller, Andrew Waller Design

PLANNING



TIP Choose the direction of the showerhead carefully to minimise splash outside the wet zone. If installing an enclosed shower, double-check the door dimensions and direction for clearance against cupboards, other fittings and the entry.



PHOTOGRAPHY (OPPOSITE) CHRIS WARNES (THIS PAGE, FROM TOP) BRIGID ARNOTT, MINDI COOKE, GAP INTERIORS/PIOTR GESICKI

Look to stylish fittings that tick off functionality needs without being space invaders, such as a concealed cistern toilet, which utilises the otherwise unused cavity within non-solid walls. "It adds valuable space and creates a seamless, modern finish," says bathroom business manager Daniela Santilli of Reece. Floating toilets and vanities also allow you to see more of the floor, which is a simple technique for evoking a sense of openness. Consider a bespoke vanity that achieves optimal storage, or look to retail items with flexible options. "Products from Issy can be customised to the millimetre, which opens up the choices to suit any bathroom," says Daniela. Also, think about your shower stall. "Depending on your layout, a walk-in, frameless shower will be visually less intrusive than an enclosed one," says Vanessa. >



FITTINGS



STORAGE

Send your storage strategy up the wall with floating shelves above the toilet or bath. You can keep it a chaos-free zone with baskets, and put every shelf surface on double duty to both store and display – from neatly folded towel collections to cotton buds in glass canisters. Hang robe hooks on the back of the door or opt for a swivel rail for flexible towel-hanging options. Recessing niches, cabinets and even vanities can result in some impressive wins. “Options like the Issy ‘Z1 Ballerina’ recessed mirror cabinets [from \$1663, Reece] take the regular function of a mirror and add the benefit of concealed storage,” says Daniela Santilli of Reece. “Like in-wall cisterns, these are easiest to install prior to sheeting and tiling,” she adds. For quick, build-free solutions, explore freestanding units that are tall, narrow and preferably wall-hung, such as the Ledin tallboy from Harvey Norman (\$499/250mm).

“Adding accents of black, as well as playing with textures and exposed materials, can turn an otherwise lacklustre bathroom into an absolute show stopper” ~ Wendy Moore, House Rules judge

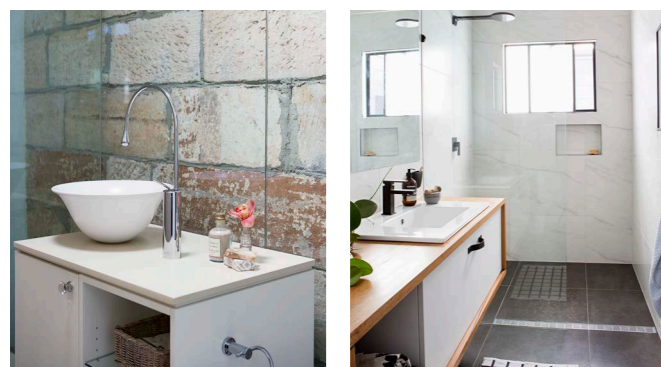
TIP Wall-hung and pedestal basins are both masters in occupying minimal footprint, albeit at the expense of storage. Counteract the loss with a simple floating shelf nearby or large shaving cabinet above.



PHOTOGRAPHY (THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) HELENA BLOM/LIVING INSIDE, CHRIS WARNES, JOHN DOWNS, SIMON WHITBREAD. (OPPOSITE) TESSA NEUSTADT/AMBER INTERIORS

FINISHES

A uniform tile colour on all walls is a safe strategy. Choose a soft hue that will reflect light paired with a matching grout colour to add to the seamless effect. Sound too boring? “Lay simple tiles in an interesting pattern, like herringbone, for some understated wow-factor,” suggests Vanessa Cook of Smarter Bathrooms+. Tile right to the ceiling to accentuate its height, or, if budget is tight, tile to the top of the entry door and match the paint colour of the remaining walls and ceiling to the tiles. Using a contrasting colour on the floor will add drama and definition, while running the floor tiles up the wall opposite the doorway will draw attention to the length of the room. Let details such as statement tapware or timber elements do the designer legwork and bring a simple palette to life. “A good balance with contrasting materials will add more visual interest and emphasise dimensions,” says interior architect Andrew Waller. “Playing with different tile proportions can also add more definition to the space.”



STYLING

“Since the space is only small you can dabble in more premium and luxurious materials on a reduced scale,” says Andrew. “Try introducing a marble shelf or feature niche, contrasted against a more economically tiled area. Just make sure these more deluxe materials are within the bathroom’s main focal areas to take full advantage.” Boost the illumination factor and style stakes simultaneously with statement lighting, such as pendants or wall sconces (as used here in this bathroom by Amber Interiors). “Also try to optimise natural light in the room as much as possible,” adds Vanessa. “A skylight can completely transform the room and how big it feels, especially if there are no windows.” Mirrors can’t be beaten for conjuring a sense of space and depth, with the added benefit of bouncing light around the room. **hb**