

How to buy

Child's play

DECORATING A BEDROOM FOR A YOUNGSTER HAS COME A LONG WAY FROM PASTEL WALLS AND WOODLAND ANIMAL STENCILS, WRITES **POLLY SIMONS**

Goosebumps Roar reversible quilt cover, POA from Indie Art and Design, indie.com.au



As any parent who has ever had to drag their child past a *Frozen* or *Skylanders* merchandise stand will understand, children's obsessions can be all-consuming and often fleeting.

One minute it's all about Peppa Pig, the next ballerinas and Harry Potter, and it can spell financial disaster for any parents trying to keep up, not to mention pose a potential fire hazard from all the cheap plastic junk they'd buy if you let them.

But there is an alternative to simply shutting the door on it when visitors arrive.

Megan Butler, mother of three and owner of designer children's furniture store Lilly and Lolly, shares her tips for creating a room that is trend-free will grow as they do.

NEUTRAL TERRITORY

Once upon a time it used to be standard for nursery walls to be a veritable explosion of animal stencils, pastel pinks and woodland themes. But as interiors trends have become more sophisticated, parents are opting to keep children's rooms plain or monochrome and adding bold colour through rugs, artwork and other accessories.

"Kids are so colourful by nature, it makes sense to keep surroundings neutral," Butler says.

If you do have your heart set on a certain theme – or you're worried things might look

a little boring – she recommends checking out the range of wall decals on offer before you pick up the paint brushes.

"There are some very clever ones out there," says Butler, who recommends Lilly and Lolly's charcoal, gold or coloured confetti spots to liven up any plain bedroom walls.

Better yet, decals can easily be taken down or replaced if you move house or the child's interests change.

THINK LONG TERM AND VERSATILE

A timeless room starts with clever planning, and cheap furniture can be a false economy if it doesn't meet safety standards or looks shabby almost straight away.

"If you buy a cheap bed, after six months it won't look so good and will eventually need to be replaced," Butler says.

Start with a few good basics – for newborns, most parents are looking for a cot, nursing chair and change table – and don't be afraid to look for versatile furniture that can change as your child does, such as a chest of drawers that doubles as a change table or the cot that turns into a toddler bed. Don't forget accessories – the right rug or artwork can take them into high school, and storage like Muuto's The Dots hangers will never →

Daffodil day bed, \$1395 with Cross quilt cover, \$175 from Lilly and Lolly; lillyandlolly.com.au



14 Decorate

→ look out of place, even as a child moves from toddlerhood to teenager.

BEWARE THE CARTOON MONSTERS

While it's their bedroom, you have to live with it – and too much *Frozen* or *Thomas the Tank Engine* can turn ugly very quickly. A better idea is to keep wall, furniture and bed linen simple, and let them show off their personality or indulge their current obsession with a few items that can easily be replaced when the next passion hits. "You can still give children what they like with key pieces," Butler says. "If a child does like Cinderella, for example, you could opt for a plain bedcover and go for a Cinderella cushion or picture instead."

THE STORAGE EQUATION

How much storage is enough? The honest answer is there can never be too much, so best to embrace it. Invest in solid, well-made pieces that won't look out of place as they grow up, and try to keep as much hidden away behind closed doors as possible.

"Kids love to collect," says Butler, who recommends mounting a row of attractive boxes on a wall to group things together, or using canvas or fabric sacks that hang on hooks on the wall. For the dreaded Lego, look for play mats that can be drawn up and put away once playtime is over.

SHARE ECONOMY

Bedroom tensions can reach new heights when a room is shared between siblings, and it can definitely cause a headache when it comes



LEFT: Armadillo + Co Confetti rug, \$660 cranmorehome.com.au
RIGHT: Diego Nero bed \$1300; Arrow quilt cover \$175, lillyandlolly.com.au

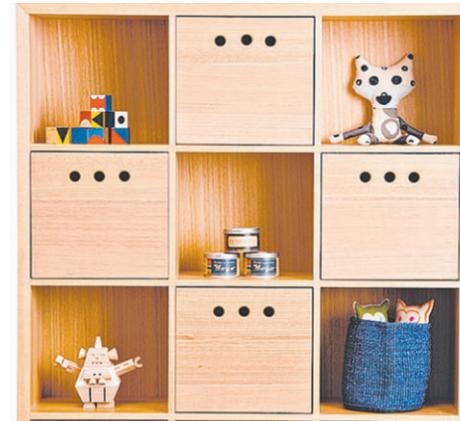
to decorating. To save drama and avoid clashing, Butler recommends keeping things simple by keeping beds the same style and choosing a colour that both children like and can be changed up according to their individual personalities – whether that's pink and ponies for littlies or more sophisticated shades for tweens and teenagers.

"Opt for the same doona covers and mix it up with cushions and artworks depending on their personalities and interests," she says. If territory is a problem, you may need to opt for separate storage areas for each child.

SCHOOL-AGE STYLING

No matter how old they are, a child's bedroom should always be a quiet oasis where they can retreat. "It's about creating a beautiful space for them that is quiet and peaceful," Butler says. Once they're at school, a desk with good lighting, a comfortable chair and plenty of storage is always a good idea.

Lilly & Lolly, 55 Mentmore Ave, Rosebery, lillyandlolly.com.au



LEFT: Marina bookcase \$1550, lillyandlolly.com.au
RIGHT: Ava convertible cot, \$1595, plyroom.com.au





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HOW SAFE IS YOUR CHILD'S ROOM?

- If using a second-hand or heirloom cot, ensure it still meets safety standards. All cots sold in Australia should meet Australian Standard AS/NZS 2172-2003.
- Ensure cots are positioned away from heaters, power points, windows, and curtain and blind cords. Cords are a strangulation hazard.
- Keep radiators and electrical sockets covered, and make sure any heat sources have guards around them to stop children from burning themselves.
- Ensure all furniture is sturdy and can't be flipped over, and that all shelving units, dressers and freestanding units are secured to the wall.
- There are strict safety standards for bunk beds, so ensure yours comply. It's recommended only children aged nine and over use the top bunk.

Target Triangle Quilt Cover Set (\$39 SB, \$49 DB, \$59 QB). target.com.au



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Top picks

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Budget pleaser

Often cheaper than two single beds, bunks are a popular option for those on a budget. With prices starting from \$849 for a single bunk (also available in king single), the Saturn bunk from Forty Winks is an affordable choice, and the built-in ladder and low height make it safe for littlies. fortywinks.com.au



Splash out

Inspired by retro caravans, Plyroom's Castello bunk is designed and made in Italy from sustainable European birch plywood. Flat-packed and easy to assemble it comes with optional trundle bed. Castello bunk bed, \$2090, plyroom.com.au or at Top 3 By Design, top3.com.au

Smart buy

Bedtime will never be boring with Domayne's My Place bunk. Available in a range of colours including charcoal, green, orange, white, lilac or mint, it is Australian-made from sturdy timber melamine and comes in either single or king single options. My Place single bunk \$1099. domayneonline.com.au

