

# Super-Sizing Small Spaces

By Sheila Selby



## Home & Garden

It's funny how two seemingly-unrelated events would lead to my AHA! moment as inspiration for this article. The first was my recent visit to an RV & Camping show. I'm not a camper by any means, but I'm fascinated by RV interiors – not the decors, but the efficiency of the spaces. It's amazing how a compact travel trailer, only seven feet, six inches wide by 20 feet long, can house a kitchen, bathroom, living/dining space, and sleeping area for four people!

The second event (a non-event, actually) was when, on one of my almost-daily visits to the Washington Square Starbucks, I mentioned to barista Steve how I see a number of the same patrons hanging out day after day, either working on their laptops or chatting with their friends. Steve said many of these regulars live in small apartments or have roommates, and Starbucks has become an extension of their living space. AHA! Since I write a design column for Brookline residents, and many are small space dwellers, my readers can benefit by learning how to incorporate RV efficiencies, with a splash of style, into their home environments.

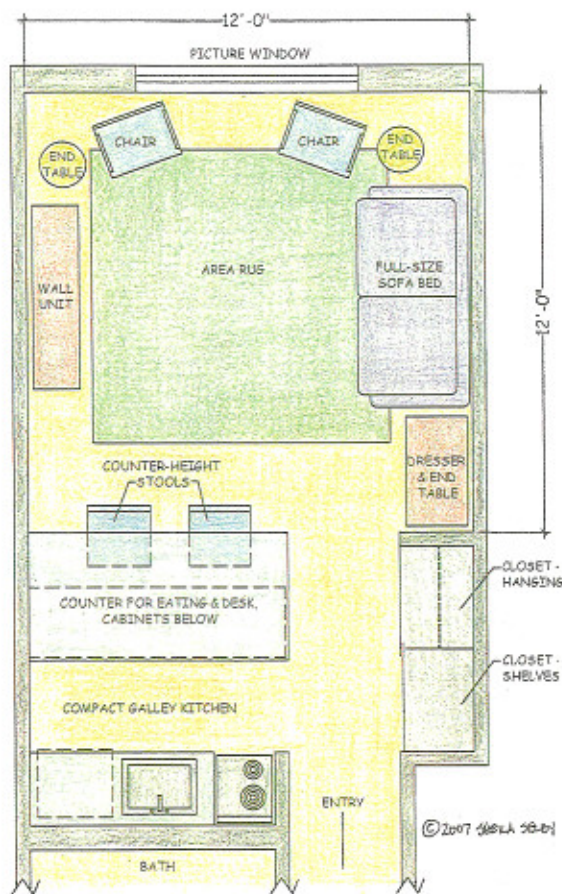
Small spaces do pose interior design challenges. Whether you live in a studio apartment, share space with a roommate, or want to make a small home or room appear larger, this article will inspire you with ways to super-size your small space.

### Super Suggestions

The first step to super-size your space is to purge unnecessary furniture and accessories that you aren't emotionally attached to. De-cluttering will immediately make a space feel larger.

Using furniture that multitasks, such as a storage ottoman that serves as a coffee table, footrest, and seating, is great for small spaces. Or consider a drop-leaf table, which can be expanded as necessary and used for dining alone or with guests or as a desk.

I designed the interior of a studio apartment that wasn't much larger than a small travel trailer. The main living space was 12 feet square.



The right furniture plan can maximize the limited space of a studio apartment.

It was separated from the compact galley kitchen by a counter, which served as a dining table and desk. Because space was so limited, every piece of furniture served multiple purposes. The sofa bed was used for sitting and sleeping. The dresser was also the end table, and a wall unit held books, a TV, stereo system, and some decorative accessories. The accompanying floor plan shows the furniture layout of this small space.

### Choosing the Right Furniture

When selecting furniture for your small space, consider using pieces with the following design features: Choose pieces that have an open look, such as a sofa with exposed legs or a glass-top coffee table. Pick low pieces that won't block windows. Make sure the scale of the furniture isn't too big for the room. By having some furniture the same color as the wall, the pieces will blend into the wall and won't visually chop up the space.

If you live in a studio, buy a sofa bed or a Murphy bed – one that folds up into a cabinet when not in use. That way, you won't feel like you're working or entertaining in your bedroom. Murphy beds have become quite popular again, and you can find them in a variety of styles. Sofa beds and Murphy beds are also good options if you don't have an extra bedroom but need a place for overnight guests to sleep.

### Letting In the Light

To maximize storage, utilize your wall space by installing floor-to-ceiling shelving. In the kitchen, open shelving, instead of cabinets, will make the room look larger. Keep window treatments simple. Use sheers or light-colored shutters over windows to let in light. If you want curtains, extend the rods beyond the width of the window, so the fabric frames the view, but doesn't cover any glass. The outdoor view will make the room appear larger. The studio I mentioned earlier had a large picture window. This 6 x 7 foot expanse of glass to the outside made a world of difference in how large the apartment felt.

Mirrors and other reflective accessories help create the illusion of more space. By reflecting other parts of the room, and reflecting light, mirrors visually expand space.

If you need one room to provide different functions, create a zone for each function. Folding screens are a good way to divide space. Using area rugs or different colors on walls will also help define these zones.

Speaking of color, don't be afraid to use a dark color in a small space. Dark colors recede, so a dark wall will appear to be farther away than it actually is and will make your room appear larger. Caveat: Paint only one or two walls in a dark color to avoid a cave-like feel.

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### Inspired!

You now have ideas on how to super-size your small space! While I was inspired by RVs and Starbucks, I hope you've inspired by this article.

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