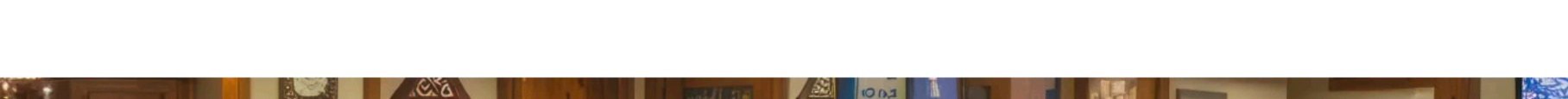


Reviving the Heart of the Home: The Family Room's Modern Comeback

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The family room is making a refreshing comeback in modern home design, reflecting changing lifestyles and evolving household dynamics over the past few years. The concept of the family room emerged in the 1950s. After the war, Americans were working hard to rebuild and families felt they needed a room for the sole purpose of leisure, a casual alternative the formal living room, where they could afford to have a bit of clutter.

The family room became an economic status symbol, a relaxed space designed for connection, comfort, and enjoying various activities. The living room continued to serve as a space for entertaining guests and showcasing decor — typically with the door closed whenever they weren't entertaining — and the family room became a practical and cozy environment for everyday life.

Following the lockdowns in 2020–21, there's been a rising emphasis on creating functional and adaptable homes. As families began spending more time at home, they discovered they needed spaces that catered to multiple needs. Remote work, virtual schooling, and home-based leisure highlighted the need for adaptable and comfortable living areas.

In response, the family room began retaking centre stage, often incorporating variations such as game rooms, recreation or workout spaces, and entertainment or theatre areas. This trend highlights the importance of designing homes that meet the diverse needs of families enjoying time together.

Family room vs. living room

The terms “family room” and “living room” are often used interchangeably, with blurred hybrid layouts, but they should serve different purposes. Living rooms are the modern parlour or reception room, located near the front entrance, so they are accessible for guests. These are formal spaces designed to make an impression, stylish and curated, featuring the home's best furnishings. Living rooms may incorporate minimal technology to preserve an elegant atmosphere.

Family rooms are often more secluded, situated near the kitchen or the rear of the house, to offer privacy and convenience. They typically feature cozy, versatile furniture such as sectional sofas, recliners, bean bags, and ottomans, allowing for layout flexibility. And they frequently include entertainment systems, gaming consoles, pool tables, folding tables for hobbies or buffet meals, and desks with charging stations, catering to modern needs.

It's this functional divide that ensures that each space serves its intended purpose, optimizing the functionality and flow of your home.

Variations of the Family Room

Today's family rooms are not a one-size-fits-all concept. Depending on your family's preferences and lifestyle, the space can take on specialized forms, or combine several functions to make a space that is perfect for the way you live.

1. Game room: Whether your family enjoys playing pool and air hockey, board games, video or arcade games, or card games, the family room provides a casual environment where you can enjoy various games together. Games spaces are usually decorated with comfortable seating, adjustable ambient lighting and task lighting over the tables and plenty of storage for game-related items. Neon signs or string lights can provide ambiance. You might consider creating several zones with a flow that ensures that each zone is easily accessible and organized while avoiding overcrowding.

2. Entertainment/Theatre Room: It's important to arrange the room to provide clear sightlines from every seat to the screen. Invest in a large, high-resolution screen, 4K or higher, and 5.1 or 7.1 surround sound system, for an immersive movie experience, placing speakers strategically around the room to enhance sound quality. Choose plush seating options like recliners or ergonomic sofas that support extended movie or TV series binges. If it's a multi-purpose room, consider creating zones that allow some of the family to enjoy a movie, while others play a game of pool.

3. Recreation room: Recreation rooms expand on the concept of a game room, incorporating activities like workouts, arts and crafts, a desk or table to catch up on study or work, or even musical jam sessions. The rec room might include a small workout corner with yoga mats and free weights, alongside a crafting table and easels for creative projects, and a fold-out ping pong table. Modular furniture is typically rearranged as needed in these flexible spaces, and there's plenty of storage to allow for a quick repurposing of a zone.

4. Reading and relaxation space: Choose a spot in your family room that is away from high-traffic areas and noise, creating a peaceful, cozy zone conducive to reading and relaxation. Positioning the space near windows takes advantage of natural light, which is easier on the eyes and can create a serene atmosphere. Plush, comfortable seating such as an oversized chair or loveseat with a footstool or ottoman for extra comfort, a La-Z-Boy® recliner or chaise lounge, and soft textiles like throw blankets and pillows will add warmth and texture.

5. Workout and playroom: It's important to clearly define different zones for various activities, such as a yoga area, weight training section, cardio corner or play area for the kids. At least a 2 x 1½ metre area is required for most exercises, with thick foam mats under each. Choose equipment that fits your workout style(s) and will fit in the available space. Multifunctional Smith training machines or foldable equipment can save space. Furniture that serves multiple purposes, such as ottomans, with storage or benches that can hold toys, are ideal for a play area. Soft flooring options like carpets or rugs create a safe and comfortable area for children. Organized storage solutions keep workout equipment or toys easily accessible yet tidy.

6. Crafting and hobby room with home office: Consider furniture that serves multiple purposes, such as tables that can be used for crafting and hobbies, homework, catching up on office work, and dining. Setting up multiple workstations, if space allows, caters to different types of crafts, such as sewing, painting, or scrapbooking. Incorporating various storage options like bins, shelves, and cabinets will keep supplies organized and accessible. Ergonomic chairs support long crafting sessions or hours on the laptop.

The takeaway

The resurgence of the family room aligns with broader cultural shifts emphasizing work-life balance, mental health, and spending quality time as a family. Whether it serves as a cozy retreat for unwinding, a hub for entertainment, or a versatile space for hobbies and games, the family room is an essential element of contemporary home design. Providing a dedicated space for families to connect, relax, and play today's family room embodies the essence of modern living.

