

## Focus more on functionality and less on aesthetics, suggests Sowmya Putran



## Small homes, BIG IDEAS



A home designed by Bengaluru-based A Threshold features a railing that serves as a seating and board game zone.



This Mumbai home is designed by Saniya Kantawala Design (SKD). Storage is blended into the layout, making it look like a natural part of the aesthetic.

A space that doubles up as a versatile party area. The mezzanine includes a library and writing desk. Designed by GroupDCA.

living area. She added a sofa-cum-bed to this multi-purpose room to accommodate guests. She divided the study from the living area with sliding glass doors. Such doors lend an illusion of 'more space' and flexibility," she adds.

Avinash Ankalg, co-founder and principal architect of A Threshold, Bengaluru, recalls a project his team executed in J P Nagar. Here, the client wanted to build three homes on a small plot. To overcome the challenge, his team opted for vertical expansion to maximise space in each home.

"We wanted to ensure that each home gets sufficient natural light and privacy. We added thin partitions crafted from local materials like Sira, and Sadarahalli granite," Ankalg shares. These partitions looked good on their own because of their natural texture and did not need further plastering or painting.

"One partition separated the kitchen from the living area. The latter was packed with features like a prayer room, storage, and even a study nook," he explains. A staircase railing doubles up as a seating and board game zone is another space-saving feature, he adds.

### Clever approach

Architect Harshith Nayak, co-founder of Avinash's firm, says designing homes in packed cities like Bengaluru requires a different approach. He explains, "In Bengaluru, all sides except the front facing a road are covered by building structures. This limits access to natural light and ventilation. To address this, we try to integrate courtyards at various levels of the home to serve as an extension of the living areas."

Wooden partitions can be opened to merge the courtyard for an indoor-outdoor feel and closed when one needs privacy. "By embracing such elements, one can transform a compact house into a serene retreat or a luxurious bungalow," he adds.

### Challenges

- Planning a stylish layout for uneven plots.
- Balancing verticality with horizontal movement.

### Wallet factor

Cost varies according to the layout. But the prices can start from Rs 3,000 to Rs 5,000 per sq ft.

## Reuse those wine corks

They can provide raw material for planters and curtains



Mini planters can be placed on magnetic surfaces.

Do you have a few pieces of wine corks lying around? Repurpose them instead of tossing them away. You can make these simple yet cute decor items from old corks.

### Pin 'em down

Pins stick into corks easily. So keep them around sewing machines and bulletin boards to store your push pins and needles.

Karthika Anandan, a craft hobbyist from Thiruvananthapuram, uses cork pieces to make pin boards and jewellery organisers. "Just like pin cushions, wine corks can be used as an organiser. Glue a few cork pieces to a board and hang it on a wall. Use this to organise trinkets like rings, bracelets, studs and danglers," she shares.

### Make dolls

Corks can be used to create cute showpieces for homes or events. You will require a fine brush or a black permanent marker, a few acrylic paints (black, brown and white), glue, paper or cardboard bits, and a pair of scissors.

To make an Easter bunny or a cute rabbit, wipe a cork clean and paint it brown or white as required. "After it dries fully, take a fine brush or fine-tip marker and draw details of a face like eyes and whiskers on it. Draw ears on hard paper or cardboard, cut them out and attach them to the main project," explains Karthika.

### Hanging decor

You will need several cork pieces, woollen or cotton twine, brightly coloured ribbons and beads to make these. Start by cleaning the corks. Then take a few twines, twirl them around, and knot them together. "Now, tie twines and ribbons on the main piece alternatively. On each twine, add beads and wind down corks on them," says Saurav Parthan, a recycler from Chennai.

String as many ribbons and twines as possible on the main twine to make it thick. "You can use these to

decorate windows or door curtains," he says. Tie the main twine to a curtain rod or a window grill.

### Mini planter

You will need a drill, planting soil, succulents, small magnet pieces and a few corks for this task.

Use a drill to make a hole inside the cork. "Add planting soil and gravel in this hole and then the succulent. Level the soil and make sure the plant is steady. Then, paste a button magnet behind the cork," notes Karthika.

Now, you can hang the planter on your refrigerator or any other magnetic surface. "If the succulent grows too big, repot it in a bigger container. You can plant a new but smaller succulent in the cork planter and keep reusing it," she adds.

### Fix your furniture

You will need glue, a drill, some screws, a screwdriver, and acrylic or metallic paints. Make your wobbly table stable by fixing thin slices of cork under its legs. "Start by determining the thickness of the cork you will need to level the problematic leg. After this, glue the cork to the bottom of the table's leg. If another leg is wobbly, repeat the process," Parthan adds.

You can use corks to mend lost parts of cabinets or broken drawer handles. Clean the corks and paint them with a bright or metallic paint. Either stick them in place or use a drill to fasten them, he adds.



Decorate corks to make cute showpieces.

### Embrace verticality

It's important to make the most of vertical space, especially in homes where there is no space for backyards, says Rahul Bansal, partner of New Delhi-based GroupDCA. In a recent project in Amritsar, Bansal designed a double-decker space with an open staircase interweaving the two. He adorned the wall adjacent to the staircase with a vertical garden. "Natural elements like gardens and water bodies counter the verticality, lending the space a cosy backyard vibe," he explains.

Furthermore, the staircase leads to a casual dining spot. And a skylight bathes the interiors with soft, diffused light, creating a soothing atmosphere, he shares.

### Create versatile zones

Bansal says it is essential to create multifunctional zones and ensure a balance between vertical and horizontal movement. This house in Amritsar has a stilt (or raised) floor, which provides space for car parking. The stilt floor is raised off the ground on stilts. The first floor features a bar, living area, dining area and double-decker space.

Upstairs, a mezzanine (an intermediate level between floors and/or the ceiling) comprises a library and a writing desk. It also serves as a vantage point. "The terrace includes a pizzeria and a gazebo. En route to this area, there's a dedicated kid's play area, a spa, a gym, and an open jacuzzi to provide a well-rounded experience," he adds.

### Don't overcrowd

The trick to maximising the feeling of 'space' in compact homes lies in a good layout plan, Bansal notes. He believes in the philosophy of reverse designing, where half of the aesthetics is determined by the layout itself. "One can evoke a sense of volume with clearances, furniture arrangement, and space balancing interventions," he explains.

Don't overcrowd such spaces with, he adds a word of caution.

### Build dedicated storage

Stay away from multiple small storage cabinets, says Bansal. For instance, in the bar area of the Amritsar home, he did not provide a wall display-cum-storage unit. Instead, he provided a separate dry storage area for bar essentials. Bansal favours building a dedicated storage for a category of item rather than spreading them in several cabinets and drawers.

Architect Rinka D'Monte from Mumbai-based Atelier ARBO, talks about an ongoing project in Lonavala in Maharashtra. Her client wanted a compact and minimalist A-shaped house spanning two floors. Rinka opted for several under-furniture and under-staircase storage spaces. She chose loose furniture that were also multifunctional.

### Add partitioning

To optimise the use of space, Rinka adopted an open-plan layout where

she integrated the dining, kitchen, and living areas seamlessly. She tucked the staircase cleverly within the living room without segregating the layout.

For a recent project in Mumbai, Saniya Kantawala turned a three-bedroom house into a two-and-a-half-bedroom

space. She is the principal designer and founder of Saniya Kantawala Design (SKD).

The initial layout featured three bedrooms and a kitchen-cum-living area. "One of the bedrooms was converted into a study room and integrated into the

## SPEND

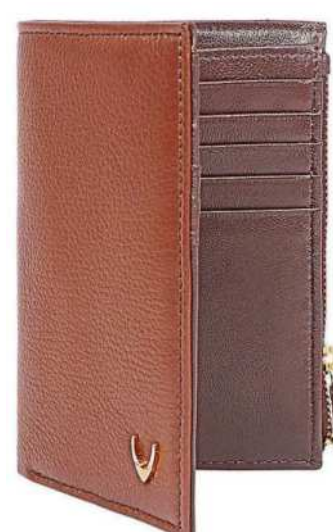
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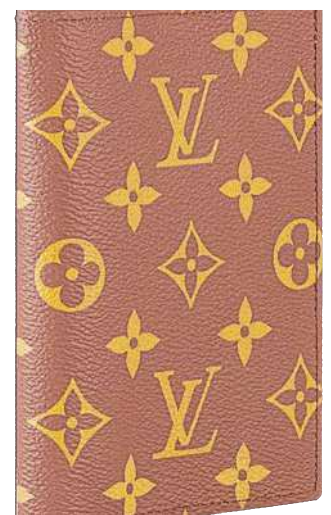
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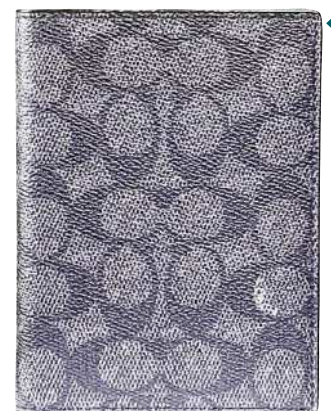


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