

Better Homes and Gardens

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The
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inspired ideas

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& Easy Touches
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Movers and Changers

Can't stop rearranging the furniture? Neither can this mother-daughter design duo. Check out their picks for the most flexible, go-anywhere pieces no home should be without.

BY AMY PANOS | PHOTOS DANA GALLAGHER



style wise

WHO

Suzanne (*right*) and Lauren McGrath

WHERE

Rye, NY

STYLE IS

Having the confidence to take a risk and the grace to pull it off.

CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

Fresh flowers at bedside.

PET PEEVE

Matchy pillows.

SOUNDTRACK

Adele's 21.

STYLE ADVICE

Buy the best you can afford, and you'll only cry once.

FAVORITE SHOP

Privet House in Greenwich, Connecticut.

Magnificent seven

Designers Suzanne and Lauren McGrath are on a mission. They want you to stop wasting money on throwaway furniture and start investing in the good stuff: quality pieces that can move from room to room, house to house, for decades. What's worthy of that kind of commitment? The McGraths' New York home and their new book spell it out. In *Good Bones, Great Pieces*, they show you seven furniture powerhouses (some of which you may already own), dozens of ways to use each, and the qualities that make for happy, long-lasting furniture relationships.



1

Bench

WHY YOU NEED IT

"A bench is a workhorse," Suzanne says. "It adds character, color, sculpture, and extra seating anywhere you need it."

WHERE TO USE IT

Foyer, porch, living room, pulled up to a dining table, foot of bed.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

"Backless benches are more versatile and easier to find," Lauren says. "We like them upholstered because you can cover them in a fun fabric without as much risk as, say, covering a sofa."

2

Love seat

WHY YOU NEED IT

"There's no other sofa capable of taking on so many roles," Suzanne says. "On its own or as part of a grouping, it has a unique ability to 'fit in' in any room."

WHERE TO USE IT

Starter apartment, living room, dining room, foot of bed.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

"Tight backs look neater than loose cushions," Suzanne says. And, Lauren adds, "A skirted love seat usually looks right only in a bedroom, so we prefer exposed legs." Sixty inches or less is the most flexible size.



3

Slipper chair

WHY YOU NEED IT

"People don't often think of buying these, but they're the most versatile upholstered chairs," Suzanne says. "Plus, they're a great shape. The fact that they're armless makes them comfortable for anyone from a child to a 6-foot-4 husband."

WHERE TO USE IT

Bedroom, living room, family room, dressing room.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

"Smaller is better," Lauren says. "If a slipper chair gets too big, it looks less appealing and isn't as easy to move around."

4

Dresser

WHY YOU NEED IT

"Dressers add character and storage anywhere, not just the bedroom," Lauren says. "We like to use them in dining rooms to store linens or as a bar in a living room."

WHERE TO USE IT

Foyer, living room, dining room, hallway, bedroom, bathroom.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

"The most versatile dresser is no more than 18 inches deep, 36 inches tall, and 50 inches wide," Suzanne says. Pairs of low, straight-sided dressers are an especially "good get" because you can put them side by side.

Put a dresser in the foyer to hold keys, hats, shoes, even incoming mail and papers.





A side table is a nice touch in a bathroom, where it can hold towels and toiletries.



5

Side table

WHY YOU NEED IT

"Every sofa needs to be served by at least one side table," Suzanne says. "You can't go wrong with a matched pair, but two different shapes, materials, or colors is even better."

(If you mix styles, both tables should be the same height: slightly taller than the sofa arm, never shorter.)

WHERE TO USE IT

Living room, family room, bedroom, bathroom.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

The most flexible side tables are between 24 and 36 inches high.

"Look for one you can see through," Lauren says. "If it has a back, it will only look right next to a bed."





6 Occasional chair

WHY YOU NEED IT
Besides flexible seating, occasional chairs can bring an unexpected shape or an interesting style contrast to a room, especially one full of upholstered furniture. "They're fantastic, accessory-like pieces," Lauren says.

WHERE TO USE IT
Foyer, living room, dining room, pulled up to a desk or breakfast table, bedroom.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR
"We prefer chairs with open-work backs to let light through and add a graphic element," Suzanne says. They should be lightweight and easy to move. Dining chairs can often fulfill this role.

7 Demilune table

WHY YOU NEED IT
"The demilune takes you where your average table doesn't," Suzanne says. "It adds another usable surface, but it's shallow so it tucks out of the way. The rounded shape just makes a room better, more interesting."

WHERE TO USE IT
Foyer, living room, staircase landing, home office, bedroom as a bedside table or dressing table.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR
"A table with no center leg is much more versatile because you can pull up a chair," Lauren says. Suzanne adds, "If you find a pair, grab both and use them on either side of a fireplace or doorway." ■



After fielding thousands of questions via their blog of the same name, Suzanne and Lauren McGrath decided to turn their expertise at spotting smart furniture buys into a book, *Good Bones, Great Pieces* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang). Much of it was photographed in their home, using their own furniture, which they moved around every which way to illustrate just how versatile the right pieces can be. *Good Bones, Great Pieces*, \$30, amazon.com

