

# SMALL IS EASY

IT MEANS LESS TO CLEAN, CHEAPER TO MAINTAIN, LOWER COST OF UTILITIES AND LESS TO FURNISH.

BY ANDREA NORDSTROM CAUGHEY

*For an artful and less chaotic look, group books on shelves by color*

PHOTOS BY JOHN ELLIS  
STYLING BY SUNDAY HENDRICKSON

*Simply Sleek*  
Bookcases do double duty in the living room, offering both storage and a color-coded montage.



*Live Loud*  
A perimeter deck mimics a front porch while expanding outdoor living space.

*Big Entrance*  
Paint, glass and metal accents help a small stoop offer a grand welcome.



## 1,400-SQUARE-FOOT RANCH

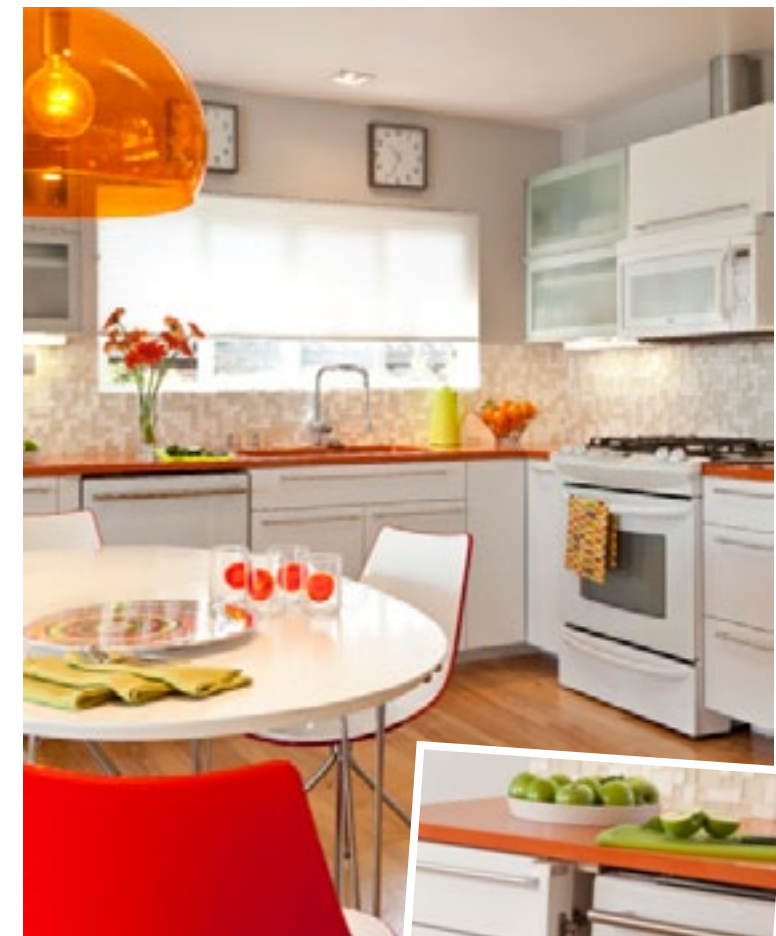
- **STRUCTURE:** Contemporary ranch
- **DECORATING STYLE:** Modern and colorful, with some European and mid-century influences
- **RENOVATIONS:** Kitchen was completely gutted and redesigned with a layout to provide appropriate storage, and better flow between rooms and the backyard
- **CHALLENGES:** Storage is the most obvious answer; however, we don't have a storage problem...when we remodeled our kitchen we added ample storage, especially with pantry space; having our hallway office helps with paperwork, homework etc., but if we didn't have this space, these things would probably clutter the kitchen and make us feel cramped
- **SOLUTION:** A hallway office—it's important to have a dedicated place for everything...or things can take over other spaces and make them dysfunctional
- **BIGGEST ADVANTAGE TO SMALL-SPACE LIVING:** It keeps us closer as a family—since the house is smaller, we tend to do more things together because everyone is in the same main area
- **BIGGEST DISADVANTAGE:** Spaces must do double duty
- **SUGGESTION:** Each house needs a small "dump zone," the area where it's okay to clutter it up with daily life; the trick is to make this area small enough that you are forced to clean it up every few days or so



*A tile mosaic and artwork hung high visually lift the ceiling line*

### **Cushy Corner**

This small fireplace niche has impact due to its new ceiling-height mosaic panel.



### **Dine Divine**

Clean-lined white cabinetry and appliances give the illusion of space in this compact kitchen.

### **Strategic Planning**

Using more drawers than cabinets allows for better space utilization.



### **Slim Chance**

Even this small vertical space by the dishwasher, above, is called into service as tray storage.

# S

**SMALL IS PERFECT FOR INTERIOR DESIGNER KRISTY KROPAT. "SMALL-SPACE LIVING FORCES YOU TO BE ORGANIZED...AND NOT A PACK RAT," SHE MUSES.**

"It also keeps us closer as a family. But on the minus side," continues Kristy, "all spaces must do double duty, and every inch must be thought out."

Kristy, her husband, Martin, and their two young sons live in a compact home in the San Diego suburbs. Her home's recent transformation from dated 1969 ranch to spirited, stor-

age-savvy modern bungalow features countless solutions to corral clutter and foster family efficiencies.

### **EXTERIOR FIRST**

The Kropats first took aim at their front yard, transforming it into a valuable outdoor room. "Our priority? A safe, grassy

### **Fun For All**

The Kropats enjoy spending time together in their cozy hideaway.







### Hidden Gem

An underutilized hall closet was transformed into an organized work spot.

### Function + Form

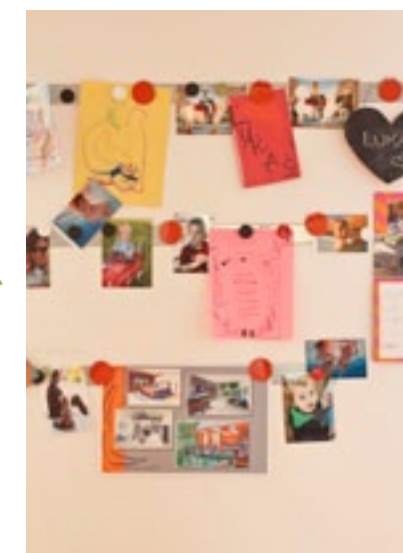
Living room furniture—such as the corner bookcase and coffee table—was chosen for its storage capacity.



## HOW TO BUILD A CLOSET OFFICE

**THE CONVERSION OF THE 8-FOOT HALL CLOSET INTO A CENTRAL FAMILY WORK CENTER CREATED UNTOLD EFFICIENCIES** “Because the office is close to the front door, hiding the clutter of paperwork was a must in the design solution,” notes homeowner/designer Kristy Kropat. “Fabric curtains were not practical for toddlers, and a bi-fold would preclude you from using the entire space. A roll-up metal door became the perfect solution. The door can be ordered in a custom size and color, and it was less than \$300 including shipping—less than the cost of custom drapes!”

1. Remove shelves and clothes bar.
2. Remove closet doors.
3. Add electrical outlets and phone line at desk height, plus electrical wiring for light.
4. Measure interior width of closet and order a custom roll-up door (Janus International, [janusintl.com](http://janusintl.com)). Closet opening needs to have a header for mounting.
5. Install shelving. (This one uses an “Elfa” system from The Container Store.)
6. Create a desk using a stock top purchased at a lumber store. Add table legs (IKEA) and file cabinets for support.
7. Mount lighting under shelf.



### Stick To It

Magnetic strips in the hall allow for a space-efficient family art gallery.

play space for the kids,” Kristy says. “We removed an existing planter, leveled the yard, added an airy fence and created seating with boulders. We also added a deck furnished with colorful mid-century chairs,” she says.

#### MAJOR SPACE-SAVERS

To revitalize a boring concrete sidewalk, the couple decided to cut out sections to create a stepping-stone pattern, then they filled those spaces in with grass or river rock. New concrete fiberboard siding painted a lively apple green, plus a custom door and stainless-steel accents also reinforce the home’s new modern vibe.

Inside, better storage and a more spacious feel drove the kitchen remodel. “The old kitchen was U-shaped, had no

pantry, was dark and closed off from the living room. We designed a new layout, with more storage and greater flow between adjoining rooms,” Kristy says. “Since the kitchen table is in the middle of the kitchen and living room area, we used lighting to set off the space for more formal meals.”

A white scheme for the cabinets, appliances and glass backsplash also fosters openness. Plentiful drawers rather than cupboards make every inch of space usable. “Also, selecting a hood/microwave combo was a great space saver, allowing room for our two pantries,” says Kristy.

#### MAGIC IN THE KIDS’ ROOMS

Kristy also worked her magic in her kids’ spaces. With two active sons, two small bedrooms and no play space, Kristy clev-



## Dream Come True

A custom-built platform bed in the master allows for storage underneath, saving valuable floor space.

Large-scale patterns work well in small doses as effective color coordinators



## Closet Below

These roomy drawers in the bed and bench hold bedding, clothes and shoes.

erly “trundled” both boys in one bedroom and used the other room for activities. “Putting all the toys in a designated room keeps them in neutral territory, making sharing easier. It also helps cleanup,” says Kristy, who installed a storage system along one wall and a work desk with magnetic bulletin boards on the other, to keep gear sorted and available.

Master bedroom clothing storage (or lack of it) was another issue. Kristy eked out more room through a custom platform bed poised atop six large drawers, adding a storage bench at the foot for shoes. “To finish off our ‘boutique hotel feel,’ we removed three dominating closet doors and added drapes that stretched across to the slider,” she says.

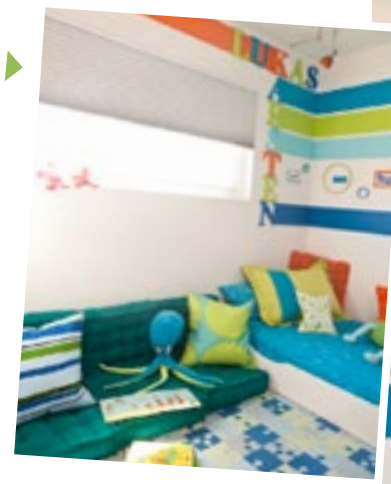
Living room furniture was chosen for its storage capacity,

including a hardworking corner bookcase and a coffee table with pullouts. The family room’s library wall does double duty as a bookcase while creating an art form with its color-coding. “Lightest colors are on top to give the illusion of higher ceilings,” says Kristy. Finally, wide-plank ash flooring was installed throughout the home to lighten up spaces and make them appear larger. “A color variation in the flooring masks inevitable dings and dents,” notes Kristy.

By embracing small spaces, Kristy says her life is streamlined in other ways, too. “Less to clean, cheaper to maintain, lower cost of utilities and less to furnish, so we can spend a little more on quality pieces. Best of all, we tend to do more things together...which you can never put a price tag on!” ♦

## Low Key

Simple, movable floor cushions form an ad hoc banquette.



## Cross Purposes

A trundle bed, right, in the boys’ room can be tucked away for more floor space.



## Play Space

One entire wall, below, is devoted to toy and book storage, thanks to baskets, cubbies and bins.

## Art Smart

This small but hardworking art station in the boys’ room keeps supplies neat and tidy.

