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A (Guest) Room Of One's Own

Welcoming visitors into your home is a wonderful way to spend time with friends, family and colleagues. Here's how to make their stay comfortable.

Whether you have an extra bedroom or need to convert an existing space into a temporary retreat, you can create a warm and inviting room for your visitors.

Where will your guest stay?

Comfort is key. Optimally, your guest room should have a door, be situated near a bathroom, and be located far from the household hustle and bustle. If a separate room isn't an option, try to provide a folding screen or hang a sheet in a doorway to give your guest some privacy. A cluttered environment is not relaxing, so scale back to make the atmosphere more hospitable. For instance, if you need your guest to sleep in the playroom or home office, relocate the toys or papers. Remove decorative items so a guest can use any tabletops or surfaces for toiletries or personal items. ➤

Clear a desk or table top so your guest has a place to put personal items.

Having a dedicated guest room is ideal, but other spots in a home (such as an office or family room) can serve as comfortable, temporary guest quarters.

Don't make a visitor search for linens. The bed should be made and towels set out before a guest arrives.

What will your guest sleep on?

If you don't already have an extra bed, an air mattress is a quick and space-efficient solution. Choose a mattress that has a thick, puncture-resistant top, comes with a storage bag, and has a pump for easy inflation. Or, purchase a feather bed to place on the floor, on a sofa or atop the air mattress. (Feather beds are comfortable and roll up for easy storage.) If you have frequent guests, consider investing in a futon, which can be a bed by night and a sofa by day. Be sure that whatever bed you provide is freshly made with clean linens. Have extra pillows handy, and consider using anti-microbial pillow covers, which will reduce allergens and prolong the life of your pillows by helping to keep them clean. Everyone has different sleeping temperatures and preferences, so place an extra blanket at the end of the bed. Of course, have fresh towels ready as well.

Where will a guest put her clothes?

After traveling, it's nice to unpack and settle in. If there's a closet in your guest room or area, clothing storage won't be a problem. If the closet is being used, remove a few items to make space for your guest's belongings, and don't forget to provide extra hangers. Hang an over-the-door hook for storing long or bulky items that won't fit in the closet or as a convenient place to hang towels. If your guest area has a dresser, empty a drawer or two, put in a fresh liner and add a scented sachet. If your chosen space has neither a closet nor dresser, consider purchasing an inexpensive, portable clothing stand (commonly called a clothing butler), which can be folded away when not in use or kept in a laundry room for air-drying clothes. Another useful item is a suitcase stand, so your guests don't have to kneel on the floor or place a suitcase on the bed to access their clothing.

The finishing touches

Now that your guest room is almost ready, take the time to add a few special extras. Arrange a vase of fresh flowers. Have a small trash can in the room, and place an alarm clock and reading lamp near the bed. It can be extremely helpful to provide travel-sized toiletries, such as shampoo, soap, toothpaste, body lotion, cotton swabs and even a spare toothbrush. If you have magazines in the house, select a few and leave them on the nightstand for your guest to enjoy. If your visitor will be spending time without you, lay out maps, travel books, information about public transportation and even the local paper so he or she can find fun things to do.

When your preparations are complete, enjoy your company. ■

Heidi Solomon is a professional organizer, a feng shui practitioner and an aficionado of the great outdoors. Her website is posh-boston.com.

Think of your home as a small inn, and follow the lead of the nicest hotels by providing your guests with toiletries and visitor information.