

SANDRA FORBES
LOVE YOUR *LAYOUT* BLUEPRINT
How to Identify and Create an Ideal Layout for Each Room in Your Home



“Principles for mastering space planning that you can start today.”

WHAT IS A FOCAL POINT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A focal point is an element in a room that draws the eye toward it and it rests there for a time. It is a point that you want someone to notice. It grabs your attention. It should tell you something about the key function of the room. It also is a way of directing someone through a room. It should draw one in.

A room without a focal point can feel uncomfortable. Upon entering, it is not clear what you should do. Imagine a room with no windows where the only couch is facing a blank wall with its back to the entrance. There is a bed in the corner with no light on it. Lastly, there are a few paintings on the walls spaced sporadically? What do you think you would do if you were asked to wait in this room for 5 minutes?

I don't think you would sit on the couch because it would make you feel uncomfortable. The bed seems out of place. I would guess you would try to fill the time walking around trying to find interest in the paintings. This is an example of a room with no focus. It doesn't help the occupant know what to do. It makes one uncomfortable.

Architectural or structural focal points are easy to identify. Upon entering an empty room, the eye falls on these points. Perhaps it is a large fireplace or arched entryway. Perhaps there is a large window that just draws you towards it to look and see what view it offers.

Some design blogs mistakenly use the term referring to anything that is eye catching. I don't mind a beautiful rug but I don't want visitors to be staring at the floor as my focal point.

These large focal points are not difficult to navigate when arranging furniture. Our only challenge is to make sure we don't obstruct the view toward them. Let them shine without covering them up.

It is rooms without a natural focal point that can be difficult. Every room should have at least one primary focal point. It helps the user of the room know what the function of the room is and helps them rest and feel comfortable.

We will be exploring in a later step how to create focal points in a room that doesn't have one.



SANDRA FORBES
LOVE YOUR *LAYOUT* BLUEPRINT

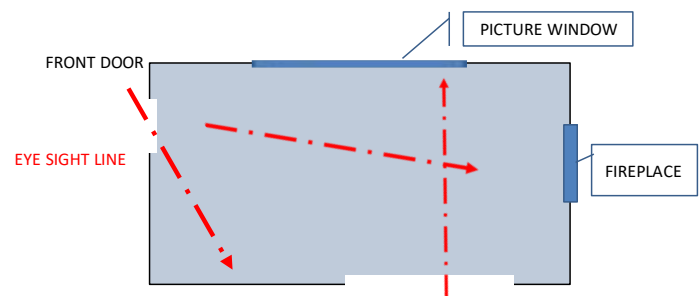
How to Identify and Create an Ideal Layout for Each Room in Your Home



Introducing the concept of a focal wall. Just as important as a structural focal point is the wall or view that is seen from adjacent rooms. Its importance is often overlooked. The view one sees from an adjacent room will either draw you in or make you want to go another way. The focal wall is always the wall across from the entrance if it doesn't already have an architectural focal point. A room that may have another focal wall is the room that can be seen from the front entrance. This is usually the wall adjacent to the entrance to the room.

Imagine a dark hallway versus a light hallway. Which one would you rather explore? Of course, it is the lighter hallway. It draws you toward it. Now imagine a painting at the end of that hallway. That would draw you to explore even more. That wall at the end of the hallway, I would consider the focal wall. It is the wall that one sees upon entering the space.

I was staging a home that had a large sliding glass door that opened out to an empty deck. This glass door was on the focal wall upon entering their kitchen from their living room. The door was beautiful but they forgot that it was also a view that needed to be considered. We created a stunning view out to the table and chairs that invited them to explore "the room" outside.



In my example here, there are 2 focal points and a focal wall. There is a large fireplace centered on the far wall. A large picture window centered on the long wall and a short wall that can be seen by everyone entering the house through the front door which makes it a focal wall. That wall will be the wall that will draw them into the room. If a focal point is not created on that wall, the guests to this home are greeted only by a closet, a hallway and a stairway leading to the unknown. All of which are not welcoming. This focal wall is important to welcome guests to this home.

SANDRA FORBES
LOVE YOUR *LAYOUT* BLUEPRINT
How to Identify and Create an Ideal Layout for Each Room in Your Home



STEP 4: Identifying existing focal points

But for this step I want you to identify what are the existing focal points in the room and identify the focal wall(s) that one sees from the hallway or adjacent room. These sight lines will be important reference lines later when choosing types of furniture would be appropriate for this space.

How to identify a focal point?

When entering a room, the easiest way to identify a focal point is to locate the wall or feature that immediately captures your attention as you enter an empty room. It may be easy to identify like a large fireplace or a large window. Other times, it is hard to identify. A room may not have any large architectural features. It may just have windows, doors and blank walls, none of which give any indication as to what the purpose of the room is. The eye bounces around from one thing to another without stopping to linger. In these rooms a focal point needs to be created through the use of furniture and décor. In this instance, identify the focal wall.

Here are some examples:

A hint of the window is shown on the left wall would be the focal point in this room. But the wall with the closet door was the wall that one could see upon entering the room which made it the focal wall. It was a very small wall but it was an important wall for the comfort of this room. This homeowner chose to create a reading corner to show that this was a multipurpose room.



SANDRA FORBES
LOVE YOUR *LAYOUT* BLUEPRINT
How to Identify and Create an Ideal Layout for Each Room in Your Home



Even a bathroom may have a focal wall. The wall across from the door is an important wall.

This short wall is the first wall that one sees as the front door is opened. It is an important wall to consider.





1. Draw in dotted lines from the entrances to the focal points in the room. There may be more than one.

You can depict these sight lines by drawing an arrow just like you did with the traffic flow paths. This time use a dotted arrow from the room entrance to the architectural focal point(s).

Keep in mind that there may be multiple focal points in a room.

2. Draw another dotted line to depict the sight line to the focal wall if it doesn't have a focal point on it.

3. Analyze Your Existing Layout for Focal Points

You don't need to write anything down or draw anything but take this opportunity to look at your current furniture layout in your room. This will give you some insight into your room and why it may or may not work well.

- Does your current furniture layout obstruct a large part of the view of the existing focal point when entering or when seated?
- Does your current furniture face the focal point?
- Do you have a nice decor arrangement on the focal wall?

SANDRA FORBES
LOVE YOUR *LAYOUT* BLUEPRINT
How to Identify and Create an Ideal Layout for Each Room in Your Home



STOP HERE AT THIS TIME....You won't be creating your focal point(s) at this time but we will return here at a later time. I have included this upcoming step here so you can read through it to help understand how focal point(s) play a vital role in the comfort of the finished space.

STEP 23: Creating a Focal Point

Use the 3 Ways to Create Focal Points Handout to plan your focal points.

Questions to Ask...

Where do I want people to look or focus on?

Decide how we want an individual to walk through the space when creating focal points to draw them. Think of your room as a painting. What is the subject of your painting? A living room may have a grouping of seating as its subject drawing one to sit down and have a conversation. A family room may have a game table drawing you to play a board game. A theater room has a large screen with all the seating pointing toward it drawing you to sit down and enjoy a movie. A bedroom draws you in to lay down with a large comfortable bed centered in the room. These are all examples of how furniture can help to create a focal point.



3 Ways to Create Focal Points

Method 1: Use lines to lead the viewer to the focal point

Two lines converging at the focal point. This method is commonly used by placing a couch or a row of chairs opposite one another flanking a fireplace. The lines created by the couch or series of chairs points the eye toward the fireplace.

Method 2: Use of color and light

Either make the focal point lighter than or darker than the areas surrounding it. This method is used by simply shining a light on what you want to highlight. Alternatively, one can use a bright or highly saturated color in an otherwise neutral room.

Instead of making your focal point bright and colorful, you can also make the rest of the room neutral in comparison.

Method 3: Placement

A focal point can also be created with the arrangement of items within the room through furniture arrangement, décor, size or color.

Furniture grouping - A comfortable seating group grounded with a rug can be a great focal point for a room. It draws one in and indicates exactly what can be done in that room.

A Collection of Items – A collection displayed nicely can be a great focal point to draw someone in the room to enjoy your collection

Light Fixture – Even a beautiful light fixture can draw you in. This can be used beautifully over a dining room table to create a dining room table focal point. Pendants over a kitchen island can also create a focal point in the kitchen.

Art or Display Pedestal – A pedestal placed strategically with a beautiful plant, vase or art piece highlighted with a focused light is a beautiful focal point.

SANDRA FORBES
LOVE YOUR *LAYOUT* BLUEPRINT

How to Identify and Create an Ideal Layout for Each Room in Your Home



A good example of drawing someone in is by using a piece of art on the wall directly in front of you as you climb or descend a flight of stairs. This is often an opportunity missed. A beautiful piece of art with a light draws a person through the space and toward that piece. It focuses them and helps them move through the space the way the designer intended.

There could be unfavorable focal points as well. When a room has an architectural feature that is unfavorable, it must be dealt with. If it cannot be removed, the most common way to minimize a feature is by changing its color.

I am not a fan of the idea that every wall needs a focal point. I think every wall should be beautiful to look at but multiple focal points can be confusing. The other walls should be secondary walls to the focal point wall. If the room lacks a natural focal point, you can create one with strategic furniture placement and decor choices.