

DESIGN & DECORATING

Quiet on The Settee!

You've adjusted to everyone being in the house all day. Next: managing the noise.

By RACHEL WOLFE

AFTER THREE-ODD MONTHS of commuting only as far as the kitchen, you've likely come a long way in transforming your living space into a workplace. Perhaps you've converted a closet into an excessively cozy home office, duct-taped blankets over windows to quash unflattering backlight and stationed fresh flowers in view of your webcam to assure your colleagues and yourself that you're flourishing.

Not even the perkier blooms, however, can disguise the shrieks of your high-schooler in the next room demanding that you "stop screaming!" as you debrief your boss at a perfectly reasonable volume, thank you very much. With every member of a household attempting variously to study, cook, exercise and work at once, noise remains the final frontier in creating a well-adapted home.

"Sound is like the reflection of light," said New York designer Robert McKinley. "If you put two mirrors opposite each other, the reflection will bounce back and forth. When you add a soft object to break up sound waves, you can mitigate noise."

Here, designers who have helped clients muffle rackety neighbors and tween gamers share inventive ways to diminish the din—from cork cladding to strategic layering—and create sound-segregated spaces. The tips might help you preserve your nerves without having to stop up your ears.



SHELF ABSORBED Books, a cork floor and carpet help keep sound from bouncing in this office by Atlanta designer Jessica Davis.

Fortify Doorways

Mary Maydan, an architect in Palo Alto, Calif., suggests replacing builder-grade, hollow doors with solid-core models. If that's a bridge too far for you, you can easily add products such as acoustic door bottoms, foam-insulation tape and draft stoppers to an existing door. "They are designed to create a strong seal at the bottom of the door and help with acoustic control," she said. For doorless openings, consider hanging curtains in beefy materials like double-lined velvet. Tie them back when you can return to regularly scheduled cacophony.

Cushion Your Floors

Hardwood, tile, linoleum—all conduct the impact of footfalls and send clamor ping-ponging about a room. Where you've got one rug, think about two. New York designer Augusta Hoffman suggests layering patterned area rugs over neutral weaves like sisal or wool "so that they don't fight with each other." In her own noncombative bedroom, Ms. Hoffman spread a thick, black Moroccan vintage rug over an ivory flat-weave broadloom custom cut to the

room. In inherently echo-y spaces, like bathrooms, add a second rug to cover tile; in kitchens, consider an indoor-outdoor polypropylene carpet. Play spaces or offices benefit from a layer of cork on the floor, which naturally prevents sound and vibration transmission. And don't forget high-density rug pads.

Swath Windows

Now is not the time for magnificently bare panes. New York designer Mark Cunningham recommends heavy drapery "to help diminish the sound of Fresh Direct trucks idling out front." Quarantiners can order curtains online. Consider pleated ones: "They can double and even triple the noise reduction when compared with flat curtains of the same weight," said Miami architect Kobi Karp.

Aim High

Ceilings reflect sound as discourteously as floors do. While an actual canopy bed might help mute your sleeping quarters, DIY alternatives can mimic the effect. Affix O-rings or galvanized pipes to the ceiling to suspend fabric you can spread around the bed, or simply hang

drapes behind your headboard to insulate the wall. New York interior architect Branko Potočnik recommends covering ceilings in any room with Acousti-Coat, a heavy, water-based paint laced with sound-absorbing fillers. And acoustic panels and pennants hung from what designers call the oft-ignored fifth wall have come a long way aesthetically. FilzFelt, made of 100% wool, comes in nearly 70 colors.

Gird Your Walls

To most effectively dampen Cardi B's wails coming through the walls, said Baton Rouge, La., designer Rachel Cannon, install upholstered panels, an ambitious DIY project. Less intimidating: Hang drapes or a tapestry on windowless expanses. In offices, architect Andrew Franz often tacks up pinup boards like Homasote's PINnacle. Made of recycled wood fiber, they can be painted or fabric-wrapped to introduce color or pattern to a room, "while reducing ambient sound and providing a place to pin up notes," he said. You'll need z-clips to hang large panels, but you can install smaller ones with art-hanging hardware or just rest them in a shallow wall shelf.

Cover the Furniture

Shelving filled with books, rather than objects, not only suggests that you're brainy, it muffles sound. Leave cookbooks and dish towels on kitchen counters to help diffuse the clatter of pots and pans, advised San Francisco designer Kendall Wilkinson, who's also a fan of nestling pillows in bare chairs and, in the hopeful spirit of "every bit helps," setting the dining room table with tablecloths and place mats. To suck up sounds in a bedroom, invest in an upholstered headboard, said Amanda M. Lantz, a Carmel, Ind., designer, who noted that soft fabric makes a better ally than leather when it comes to quiet. In San Francisco, designer Emilie Munroe has been splitting larger rooms into semi-private spaces with dividers and screens. "You can further the sound protection by draping a colorful blanket over the top," she said. And someday, when your tolerance for noise has recovered, you can blast "Die Hard with a Vengeance" on your home theater system while curled up under that very same blanket.



FIT FOR A KID A regally insulated bed in a child's room in the Brooklyn home of designer Giancarlo Valle.

CULT FOLLOWING

These Stripes Live Up to The Hype

Design pros turn to Scalamandré's classic leaping zebras wallpaper for a dash of dynamism



History Zebras cavorting amid arrows against a crimson background? It seems random, even frivolous, but this renowned, high-spirited pattern could not have been more intentional. In 1945 the owner of Gino, an Italian red-sauce joint, commissioned Flora Scalamandré, wife of the legendary textile house's founder, to design wallpaper for his drab Manhattan restaurant. When it came to covering the walls of his namesake eatery, Gino Circiello had three goals: Hide splatters of marinara, invoke his hunting hobby and embody his dream of an African safari.

Allure Designers say that Scalamandré's zebras, now offered in a range of custom

and stock colors, have endured precisely because of the way they hop so unexpectedly into relatively conformist rooms. The motif is a go-to choice for enlivening powder rooms, foyers and hallways. "It adds whimsy to an otherwise sober setting," said San Francisco designer Maria Haidamus.

Fans Andy and the late Kate Spade, musician Mark Ronson, Diane von Fürstenberg

Cult Moments Cameos in Wes Anderson's "The Royal Tenenbaums" and Woody Allen's "Mighty Aphrodite," which includes a scene at the now-closed Gino's. Zebras Wallpaper, \$185 a roll, scalamandre.com. —Lexi Mainland

FAST FIVE

Seats of Clay

21st century incarnations of the ceramic garden stool—born in Ancient China—that serve chicly as chair or table, indoors or out



White/Blue Willow Stool, \$364, annieselke.com



Facet Ceramic Stool Table, \$559, pfeiferstudio.com



Quilted Stripe Cactus Garden Stool End Table, \$219, crateandbarrel.com



Garden Stool in Dark Green Marble, \$2,250, christopherspitzmiller.com



Cork Outdoor Side Table, White, \$699, onekingslane.com

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