

FOCUS



WHAT TEENS REALLY, REALLY WANT

Keep the peace at home by creating a space just for them, writes **Chelsea Clark**

As any parent of teenagers will tell you, they can be a difficult bunch to understand. In what can seem like a matter of minutes to mum and dad, kids transform from fun-loving pre-teens who can't get enough family time to adolescents who prefer spending time alone or with friends.

"Developmentally, all kids get to a stage when they like to be on their own," explains parenting expert Michael Grose from parentingideas.com.au.

"I've seen each of my three children enter the fog of adolescence and wondered what happened to the once compliant and easy-going kid."

At home, you'll probably find your teen behind his or her closed bedroom door which Michael — and other parenting experts — say is completely normal.

But a new trend is emerging for teen-friendly spaces in the home where your children can both spend time alone and hang out with their friends without retreating to their bedroom.

Many modern custom-built and display builders homes such as Eden Brae, Metricon, Sekisui House and Ichijo are incorporating secondary living spaces or rumpus rooms designed to be used as a "teen retreat".

"I'm a big advocate of the bedroom as a personal sanctuary," explains Michael.

"For that reason I think it's important that teens have another space — separate to their bedroom — where they can relax, chew over the day or have friends over."

But creating a space where your teen wants to be requires more than an extra TV and some PlayStation games.

Interior designer Kate Abdou from Kate Abdou Design says the key is to involve them in the planning process.

"The aim is to create a space they love spending time in," she says.

"Teenagers are stepping into their



Create this teen bedroom from Fantastic Furniture for \$663.

independence and they are maturing, so it's a good idea to give them some input ... within reason, of course.

"Technology will nine times out of 10 be at the top of the list, but the space could also include comfy furniture to chill out in, or a music or gaming area if that is what they are into."

In a perfect world, we'd have unlimited space at home so each member of the family could

enjoy their own bedroom and living space and still have room for family spaces such as the traditional kitchen, dining and lounge room.

MAKE THE MOST OF A SMALL SPACE

The reality is many families don't have this luxury and space for teenagers is often confined to their bedroom.

"You don't necessarily have to devote an entire room to your teen," says Michael. "You

could partition off a space at one end of the living room for instance. Boys, in particular, like to lounge, so a couple of beanbags for them to just hang out on can do the trick. We had a similar space and my son would often just relax there. We purposefully don't keep it too pristine or tidy so it would be more attractive to him."

If you do section off a room, Kate says keeping your teen's belongings organised can reduce clutter.



A wallpaper mural of a New York street scene turned this teen's room into an industrial-style warehouse complete with boys' toys.



Ikea creates a bright, fun space using the Expedit storage system and Sofia and Algot fabrics.

► "Storage and concealment is the key here," she says. "For items that can be put away when not in use, there are an allocated box they can be stored in. There are some great entertainment units that can conceal equipment also."

If you have a basement, garage or even a shed you could also consider transforming that space for use by your teen.

DON'T SPEND A BUCKET

Transforming a space in your home into a teen hangout doesn't have to be expensive. There are plenty of budget-friendly solutions for making over rooms according to Kate.

"Painting the walls and adding a colourful, patterned rug can be done inexpensively and can easily be changed," she says.

Interior designer Karen Muller from Real Living Interiors also recommends picking up some preloved furniture, depending on the style of the room you're creating. But don't forget your teens will grow up and move out, so keep the space usable for afterwards.

"To get longevity, stick to neutral, practical coloured furniture and then accessorise the space with some fun pieces such as cushions, ottomans and tables," recommends Kate.

ALONE TIME

Despite creating a dedicated recreational space for your teen, there will be times when they just want to retreat to the privacy of their bedroom.

"It's fine for them to take a bit of refuge in their room," says Michael. "But be aware of

exactly how much time they're spending in there alone. I always insisted on shared meal times when my children were teenagers."

One of the biggest arguments in any family will be the state of a teenager's bedroom.

"A teenager's bedroom needs to be a very functional space," says Kate. "Storage! I can't promise that they'll use it all the time, but if there is a place to put everything, there is greater chance it will be used."

"Bins to sort clean and dirty clothes and lots of wardrobe space/drawers will reduce clutter."

SPACE TO STUDY

Michael recommends a separate study area for older teens away from the bedroom.

"Space carries memory," he says. "Bedrooms are for sleeping not for working and a lot of kids have trouble separating the two. Even if you have to give away one end of the dining room table for them, I think it's important that they have a completely separate study space."

If space is an issue and a desk in the bedroom is unavoidable, create "zones" to segment study, relaxing and sleep time.

"The 'desk zone' can be sectioned off either by a screen or curtain to reduce distraction," says Kate. "The desk area should have room to spread out, and shelving and multiple drawers so everything can be packed away. Lighting is important, so a desk lamp is a good idea."

More ikea.com.au; freedom.com.au; reallivinginteriors.com.au

Pictures Bob Barker, Thinkstock

Give teens the chance to design their own space

The key to understanding what teens want is as simple as asking, says designer Karen Muller from Real Living Interiors.

Before she even started work on this warehouse-style bedroom, she spent time getting to know the teenage boy who was set to call this room his own.

"The entire home had been renovated previously but the parents didn't think the kids' rooms really reflected their personalities," explains Karen.

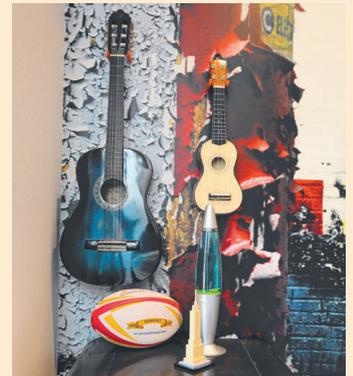
"I made it my priority to really understand what inspired this young man, what his interests are and what he's into before I even considered what the room might look like."

A chat with Karen's young client revealed his interests ranged from rugby, basketball and skating to music and travel after a recent family holiday to New York.

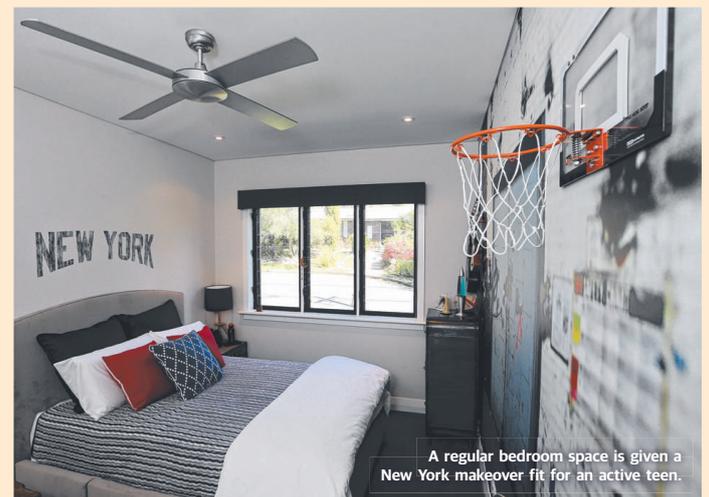
"His interests really became part of the room," says Karen. "I mounted his guitar and skateboard on the wall, essentially making the room's decor part of a storage solution for these tricky items."

Karen's advice for creating the perfect teenage bedroom is to let the room's owner get involved in the design process.

"Kids can be so creative, they're not



confined by what we can sometimes see as 'design rules'," she says. "Mum and dad can sometimes want the entire home to have a uniform look but that can mean the personality of the teenager is not necessarily embraced. If you want your teenager to really feel a connection with their space, get them involved and excited about creating it."



A regular bedroom space is given a New York makeover fit for an active teen.