



The Best Studio Apartment Layouts Have These 3 Things, According to Experts



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Credit: Melanie Rieders

Living in Chicago, I've seen my fair share of studio apartments—some spacious, some glorified closets. While the idea of a studio might conjure minimalism for some and restriction for others, with the right touches these spaces can really impress. The trick? Incorporating some expert-approved features into the studio's layout. Below, design

experts share the things they look for when designing and staging truly functional and breathtaking studios.

Designated zones

Studios often present as one open room. But that doesn't have to be the case. Cathy Hobbs, founder of the New York City-based home staging and design company Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes, shares, "You want to be able to divide it into zones, you want to be able to have a lounge zone, a sleep zone, and maybe even an entertaining zone—a dining zone."

The best studio layouts showcase purposeful, designated areas for the different spaces in a conventional home. "A lot of times people don't want it to feel just like a hotel room, they want to be able to feel like it's a full apartment where they can have guests over, where they can sleep," Hobbs says.

Even tricky open kitchen areas can be zoned off. "When the kitchen is open and it's almost like a part of the entire space—not sectioned off—I like to create separation with... a kitchen island/cart-type situation, because that defines the kitchen area," says Nitu Patel, founder of Phoenix and Rose Feng Shui.



Credit: Melanie Rieders

Thoughtful bed placement

Speaking of zoning, you should start thinking about a studio's layout by planning the sleeping zone first.

"The studios I really like are the ones with the bedroom alcove because it creates a defined sleeping area without furniture having to define the area," Patel says. If a studio has an alcove, that's the ideal spot for a more intimate bedroom space. The other living areas can be created around that built-in zone.

When designing studios, Patel starts with the big furniture pieces. "The furniture is the building blocks of a space. That's what's going to help you have really beautiful flow in your home; it's going to eliminate clutter. As long as I can place the furniture in an optimal way, everything builds around it," Patel says. Obviously, a bed takes up the greatest real estate in a studio (unless the space has a hideaway or Murphy bed). You can place it in a corner to maximize square footage, or you can leave space on either side of the bed to create a sense of spaciousness.



Cohesion with color

Experts agree that the best studio layouts not only designate spaces for sleeping, eating, entertaining, and lounging, but also maintain a sense of cohesion. This, they say, can be

done with color. “Light colors as opposed to dark colors or dark tones will help to make a space feel more open, spacious, and fresh,” Hobbs says.

“I always say ‘Why not add color without picking up a single paint brush?’ and the way we’re going to do that is through the accent accessories and artwork,” Hobbs explains. This is where color mapping comes into play. Hobbs recommends picking one grounding piece and building the room from there. “You’re going to pick an inspirational piece—it can be a rug, it can be an accent chair, it can be a piece of art—and then you’re going to pop and repeat a color that you’re pulling out of that inspiration piece throughout the room.”

Being purposeful with color can make all the difference in helping a smaller studio maximize space visually, resulting in a knockout layout.