

SIMPLE 6 STEP FORMULA FOR styling any nightstand

When redesigning a bedroom, a lot of time is spent thinking about decorating with bedding, rugs, and pillows. But you shouldn't forget about exactly how you are styling your nightstand in order to pull the room together and complete the look.

For many, the nightstand is purely functional – there to hold a glass of water, book you are reading, cell phone as it charges. Serving a utilitarian purpose doesn't mean that it can't also be beautiful while positioned next to your nicely styled bed, however. Even for minimalists, there is opportunity to merge form and function.

How does one go about decorating their bedside table? And how do you find a balance between the the ordinary things you need accessible and the accessories that are purely pretty? Read on to learn the answers to these questions and many more foolproof nightstand styling tips.

STEP 1: DECIDE WHAT YOU ACTUALLY NEED

First and foremost, a nightstand is beside your bed to keep the things you need accessible. There is no point in designing a pretty vignette if it doesn't serve your needs as well.

Take a few moments before you start buying decor or styling your pieces to consider what is most important for this small piece of furniture to hold so that they can be figured into your plans. If you share the bed, it is important for both of you to do this as each side can be styled to meet that person's needs. **Pick and choose just those items that you feel will serve the purpose of making your nightstand functional and beautiful.**

STEP 2: CHOOSE YOUR LIGHTING SOURCE

Bedside lights provide illumination as you move through your room before bed, allow you to read before falling asleep, and is there if you need it on a gloomy day. Whatever you choose, make sure that it will give off the right amount of light for your needs. There are three types of lighting to consider for your nightstand:

No. 1: TABLE LAMPS

Lamps are the most common choice for nightstands. A substantial fixture can ground your vignette while adding style, color, and texture to the bedroom, especially if you opt for minimal other decor. They can, however, take up a large amount of space. **The size of the lamp must be in scale with the bed, nightstand, and decor it is displayed with.**

- As a general rule, lamps that are about 1/3 the width of the nightstand and about 1/3 to 2/5 the height of the nightstand will look the best.
- Look for ones that are about 28 to 32 inches tall. Ideally, when you are sitting up in bed, the bottom of the shade should be around your chin level.
- Aim for bigger lights as lamps that are too small will always look more out of place than ones that are too large.

No. 2: SCONCES

Sconces are great if you want to free up space on the top of your nightstand and adjustable options allow you to bring light closer when you need it to read. There are hardwired and plug-in options, although remember you will be seeing the cord in the latter choice. Also, the type of sconce you choose affects the amount of light it will emit. Some options are better accent lights than reading lights.

- When hanging a sconce over a nightstand, it should be mounted so the light hangs just above shoulder height when sitting up in bed and is close enough to turn on without getting out of bed. With a traditional height bed, this will be around 60" from the floor.
- In most cases, the sconce should be centered with the bedside table, although some adjustable options may need to be mounted off-center so that the lamp itself hangs in the right spot.
- If you choose a sconce or hanging pendant, add something more substantial to the vignette below it like a large vase or piece of art to balance the display.

No. 3: HANGING PENDANTS

Hanging pendants are a more modern, unexpected look that also allow your nightstand to have extra space. While there are a few options for plug-in pendants, this option likely requires an electrician to install junction boxes in the ceiling, adding to the cost of your lighting choice.

- Try to hang pendants so the light is about 28 to 32 inches above the top of your nightstand to allow room for decorative objects below and adequate illumination when sitting in bed.

STEP 3: ADD ART OR MIRRORS

Framed art, like a large table lamp, can prove to be an ideal focal point in this small vignette adding color, pattern and personality. Your eyes will naturally land on these objects first when you enter the bedroom. Choose prints that have a palette similar to the design of your bedroom.

Art can lean up against the wall, hang several inches above the nightstand, or do both by layering the artwork. When hanging art, aim to have the bottom of the frame about six to eight inches away from the top of the nightstand. It needs to be close enough to visually be part of the display, yet far enough that there is some separation. Be sure that the height where it hangs is either at least a few inches above or below the top of your lampshade.

It will likely look best to slide your table lamp to the left of right of artwork centered over the nightstand so that you can fully appreciate it. And yes, it is fine (preferred, actually) for your lamp to

slightly cover part of your artwork. This creates layers that connect the two pieces. Consider the artwork to be a backdrop filling up the space, adding interest and depth behind your decor and other functional pieces.

In addition to art, consider mirrors or other sculptural wall hangings. Mirrors hung on both sides of the bed adds drama and reflects light, which is especially nice in a dark room. Center the mirror over the nightstand approximately 3 to 4 inches above the top surface. A bedside lamp can either be centered in front of the mirror or pushed to the outer side of the nightstand away from the bed.

STEP 4: INCLUDE SOMETHING "LIVING"

Plants and flowers, whether real or faux, bring a sense of life to a bedroom. Whether a bouquet of fresh flowers, cut branches, an arrangement of silk greenery or a small succulent garden, this pop of green energizes the vignette. There are even plants like aloe vera or snake plant that improve the air quality in your bedroom while you sleep.

STEP 5: PICK YOUR DECORATIVE STORAGE OPTIONS

Depending on what you chose as your nightstand necessities, you likely need a place to store them out of sight. For the things that aren't so pretty, there are ways to either conceal them or enhance their decorative appeal.

- Many nightstands have built-in storage options like drawers, shelves and cabinets with doors where you can tuck away things when they aren't being used to keep surfaces clear for decorative objects.
- For furniture that has an open shelf or cubbie, look for decorative baskets or bowls where items can be tucked away.
- Pretty lidded boxes sitting on the top of a nightstand provide somewhere to store the things you don't want to see like earbuds, lip balm, tissues, lotion, glasses, and other daily essentials. A decorative bowl is helpful for holding jewelry at the end of the day.
- And don't forget that you can always dress up the things that you need to leave sitting out. Look for stylish tissue covers for tissue boxes or a beautiful [carafe and glass for your nightly water](#).

STEP 6: FINISH WITH YOUR PERSONAL TOUCHES

It is time to make it a little more pretty and "you". Fill in where you think you need a little extra something with a framed picture of you and your family, a decorative clock, stack of books, or a memento from your travels. This is where your personality can really shine.

HOW TO COORDINATE NIGHTSTANDS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BED

For a master bedroom, it is likely you will have a nightstand resting on both sides of the bed. How do you style them both to meet the needs of the person sleeping on that side, while still coordinating with the nightstand on the other side? **The easiest way for nightstands to look cohesive is to keep the design mainly symmetrical.** Assuming you have the same nightstand on both sides, then you can use two matching lamps or sconces to ground the vignette and hang matching mirrors or similarly sized and designed artwork behind the lighting. Then do a little balanced styling to each side.

BONUS STYLING TIPS

| CONSIDER SCALE

The relationship between the objects you choose and how those objects relate to the room as a whole are one way to make a design feel warm and inviting.

- **Individual pieces should not take over the top of the nightstand.** Don't choose a lamp that is too large for a small nightstand or cover the entire piece of furniture with decor and personal items. Leave a little white space where the eyes can rest. A vignette rarely looks best when every square inch of a space is filled.
- **Consider the size of the room and headboard so that the styling neither overwhelms or underwhelms the space.** Expansive rooms with high ceilings can have vignettes that extend up well past the headboard, while a smaller bedroom needs furnishings appropriately sized for the space.

| DECORATE IN ODD NUMBERS

Decor styled in groupings of three, five or seven is more appealing to the eyes than when displayed in even numbers. It is the easiest way to make a vignette feel effortless. A small nightstand will likely look best with the minimal three objects while larger nightstands can handle five or seven.

- Remember, a stack of books or tray filled with individual pieces can count as one object.

| VARY HEIGHTS

As is true with any vignette, it is important that the pieces you choose do not all rest at the same height visually. Your lamp will likely be the tallest (unless you have something hanging on the wall behind it). But then you need to vary the heights under that with your boxes, books, greenery, and decor. **You want every piece to rest at a slightly different height.**

| ADD LAYERS

Layers move your eye through the vignette creating a well-rounded space and connect the individual pieces together to form one cohesive display. You want decor to be in front and behind each other. Use stacked books to raise individual decorative pieces to add height and bring attention. If the lamp you choose is too short, set it on a stack of books. Start by placing the tallest piece, likely your art or light fixture, and ending with the smallest. Layer one piece in front of another.

| CONTRAST OF TEXTURES

A mix of textures leads to an enticing display and is one of the most important concepts to focus on. The eye loves contrast, so a vignette with a gray textured lamp and woven basket sitting on the same wood nightstand would be seen as more interesting as a lamp with a wood base sitting on a wood nightstand. When gathering accessories, try to choose items that have a variety of textures.

| USING TRAYS

If you've got a lot of small things to display or if your nightstand is feeling too cluttered, a tray can make it all look more intentional. Gather multiple objects together with a tray underneath and decoratively it will now read as one piece bringing order to the chaos.