

Furniture
& Design
Trends



Closing Up Open Floor Plans

After a year at home because of the coronavirus pandemic, many people are realizing that their open concept floor plans — missing walls and doors, but great for parties and entertaining — aren't so great for working and schooling from home.

The experts at real estate website Zillow are predicting that new construction buyers will be in the mood for more walls and more privacy.

In a 2020 survey by Zillow and The Harris Poll, 27% of people surveyed said they would consider moving to a home with more rooms, one of the top reasons for considering a move. This is a direct result of the pandemic, Zillow says, and of spending more time at home because of the coronavirus.

“Open floor plans are changing,” said home builder Berks Homes’ Vice President of Marketing Katie Detwiler. “People are feeling like they need more privacy, so we’ll see more doors — especially for home offices — more insulation for noise control, and separate spaces to keep the kids busy while parents work. More people will work



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from home in the future — period. There will need to be space and privacy to accommodate that.”

Berks is already adding separate spaces in its home designs, including mud rooms at the entrance from garages as a space to remove shoes, wash hands and get cleaned up before entering the main living area. There’s also, Zillow

says, likely to be an increase in other separate spaces, like en-suite bathrooms in bedrooms, double master suites and other like features to reduce the spread of germs to the rest of the house.

While the real estate market is booming as people realize they don’t like their homes as much as they used to, Zillow says there’s a particular boom

in new construction. Searches for new construction on the real estate app are up 73% from 2019, with shoppers citing the fact that the homes haven’t been lived in as an appealing feature.

Smart home features that boost cleanliness are also likely increasing in popularity. Zillow design expert Kerrie Kelly sees a rising popularity

in touchless faucets, bidets and self-cleaning toilets.

“Touchless faucets and bidets are only the beginning,” she said. “Just wait until the floor tile takes your temperature and the bathroom mirror checks your vitals. Exciting new products are on the horizon when it comes to keeping a clean, safe and healthy home.”

Work from Home Trends

Coronavirus has more people working from home than ever before, and it's a trend that's likely to stay long past the end of the pandemic.

Newsweek says most employees would rather continue working from home, and, for companies, working from home could afford them lower overhead costs.

Not only is working from home changing the workplace, it's also changing how we live. People are carving out office space from their homes and rearranging their living spaces to also accommodate work.

SPACE

You need to arrange a space with an actual monitor, keyboard and mouse so that you're not hunching over a laptop, Architectural Digest says. Have a dedicated space of some sort, ideally with a door, and use a schedule that's similar to your in-office work day.

Even if you don't have a door, you can create your own space like using a dedicated space and selected objects that tell your brain it's time to go to work. Situate your work space near a window for natural light for maximum productivity and stimulation.

COLOR

What colors you see can change how you think, the



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magazine says. Blue helps creativity, green sparks imagination, and it doesn't have to be paint. Bring in pops of color through plants or prints displayed in your space. And don't forget the all important video-call background. Curate your space so that you're easy to see and hear on those daily Zoom calls.

SOUND

Speaking of hearing, you don't want your space to be

too quiet or too loud. Architectural Digest says the audio sweet spot is around 70 decibels, or the sound of a vacuum cleaner. Try playing instrumental music in the background or turning on a TV for noise, but mind that it's not too distracting.

SETTING THE TEMPERATURE

We're all familiar with the office that's too hot or too cold, and of the various strat-

egies people have to cope with that. The good news is that, by working from home, you have control of the thermostat. You want to set it to a comfortable level for you and your family.

You also want to make sure you have good air quality. If your time at home has you realizing just how dusty your house is, maybe set an appointment for a thorough cleaning by professionals and invest in a home air filter for

your work space.

TALK ABOUT BOUNDARIES

Finally, now that you've set up a space and a routine, you need to talk boundaries with your family members. Clearly and concisely. Establish a routine and rules of the road with them to make sure no one goes wandering by in their PJs during a Zoom call or screams for toilet paper during that important teleconference.



Small Space Storage

You can never have enough storage. It's a given truth of life, much like death and taxes.

You can, however, improve on your storage situation by making the most of even the smallest spaces in your home. Here's how to maximize your storage on a minimal budget.

FIND HIDDEN STORAGE

The experts at Better Homes & Gardens point out that there's storage potential hidden all over your home. One of the first places you should look is up. Extend your shelving and cabinets all the way to the ceiling where you can store bulk and rare-

ly used items. Keep a step stool nearby so you can safely reach.

BEHIND THE DOOR

Use the flip side of your doors to hold boots, jewelry, spices, wrapping paper and anything other small items you need to store. Build your own storage with a combination of hooks and bars attached to the back of the door to customize it to your space.

BY THE ENTRY

Turn unused space at your entry

into a drop area by adding a small table.

Hang up hooks, grab a bench and a boot tray to keep things neat. Keep frequently used items out of the way in baskets. This is a great place for shoes, bags, keys, the mail and other small items.

STORAGE IN FURNITURE

Look for furniture with its own hidden storage. Ottomans, beds, benches and more come with hidden storage compartments that are great for hiding away clutter. Coffee tables can hide games and kids' beds can have a built in dresser with the addition of a few drawers.

OVER THE CAR

Looking up is key to finding extra space in the garage as well. Wall-mounted cabinets above your car's hood can hold smaller items. Make sure your cabinets have doors so that items can't roll out and hit your car.

STRATEGIC SHELVING

Boxy shelving units that are all the same size can overwhelm small rooms. Look for ladder-style pieces with varying size shelves to lighten the room or use light-colored shelving units at varying sizes. Make sure you scale the size of your shelving to your rooms, BHG says, looking for small units to fit your small space.

What Is Mid-Century Modern?

Mid-century modern, often abbreviated MCM, is an American design movement popular from 1945-1969, and it's outrageously popular once again.

A product of the space age, mid-century modern looks back to the future with clean lines without decorative embellishment, easy organic curves and functional forms.

These minimalist pieces often explored different materials, sometimes juxtaposing different or contrasting materials. The color palette ranges from natural tones to bold colors and graphic black and white pieces. If colors were featured, they were bright or saturated to emphasize some design elements.

Some of the best-known mid-century modern designers include George Nelson, Edward Worley, Harry Bertoia, Alexander Girard, Jens Risom, Eileen Gray, and Charles and Ray Eames. It's not just limited to home decor. Architecture reflected it as well, with lower roofs, bigger windows and open floor plans — think the house from “The Brady Bunch.”

Today, mid-century modern, with its clean lines and materials, plays well with a variety of styles. Going full-on



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MCM might be a little overwhelming, particularly in small spaces, but a splash here and there works well. As with any decorating style, it's important to balance colors, sizes and textures. Today's MCM furniture is affordable and has geometric, curving lines. It's multi-use furniture that can serve several differ-

ent spaces if you pick quality furniture.

The modern MCM palette tends more warm — orange, yellows, greens and teals — with mustard yellow having a particular moment right now. Wood tones should be rich and brown, but some pieces can and do feature Scandinavian-influenced

lighter woods that can be used as well. Remember that neutral colors never go out of style.

Decorating experts at Apartment Therapy recommend staying away from bold, saturated colors unless you really love it, and clear lucite furniture does open up a space, but it's less durable

than other materials. Retro textiles, when paired with the classic mid century shapes, can also be a bit much.

“Be selective in choosing your mid-century moments and mix them with pieces from other time periods for a more personal look and feel,” designer Courtney McLeod told the decorating website.



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Flooring Grounds the Look

After a turbulent — to say the least — last year, many people are looking for peace and tranquility in their homes. A peaceful environment starts at the ground level: the floor.

These trends are a good place to start if you're looking to get grounded in your home.

NATURAL LOOK

Loretta Willis, an Atlanta interior designer, tells Realtor.com that hardwood flooring brings the outside in, in a good way. Pale oak floors or dark walnuts are growing in popularity, the site says, especially when paired with dark cabinetry. (White cabinetry? That's last year.).

Stain colors are going organic. "Our research team is currently looking at acidic products like black tea and

pomegranate juice to see how they can stain an oak floor using the tannins," Page Nazarian told Realtor.com. "It's amazing the depth that can be achieved this way versus traditional oil-based stains."

RIFT-CUT FLOORS

Rift-cut floors and milled perpendicular to the log's growth rings, creating a straight, linear grain with no flecking. They have a clean, uniform look that highlights the grain and natural beauty of the wood in a unique way. This kind of flooring is accented best by using longer boards, which

also give the illusion of a bigger space.

NATURAL FIBERS

Natural carpet include jute, sisal, wool or seagrass. This carpeting is an alternative to hardwood because it offers an organic look without the hard lines of wood flooring. Depending on the kind of carpeting you choose, you may also have cheaper initial and maintenance costs. Low-pile or woven carpets wears better than other carpets.

LAYERING AND REPURPOSING

If you have carpet already, you can

still lay on area rugs for a plush, new feel. Pick rugs that complements your carpet and doesn't compete with it. You can also repurpose old, quality Turkish or Persian rugs to add traction and textures to old stair cases.

PATTERNS

There are lots of carpet patterns that are hot right now. For a minimal look, seek out carpets that have a subtle pattern to add texture and help a room feel finished. Plaids are great ways to make a structured statement and can help give you a grid for laying out your furniture, too. If you're going big or going home, look for an animal print to make a statement in any space. Just keep the rest of your decor understated for maximum impact.

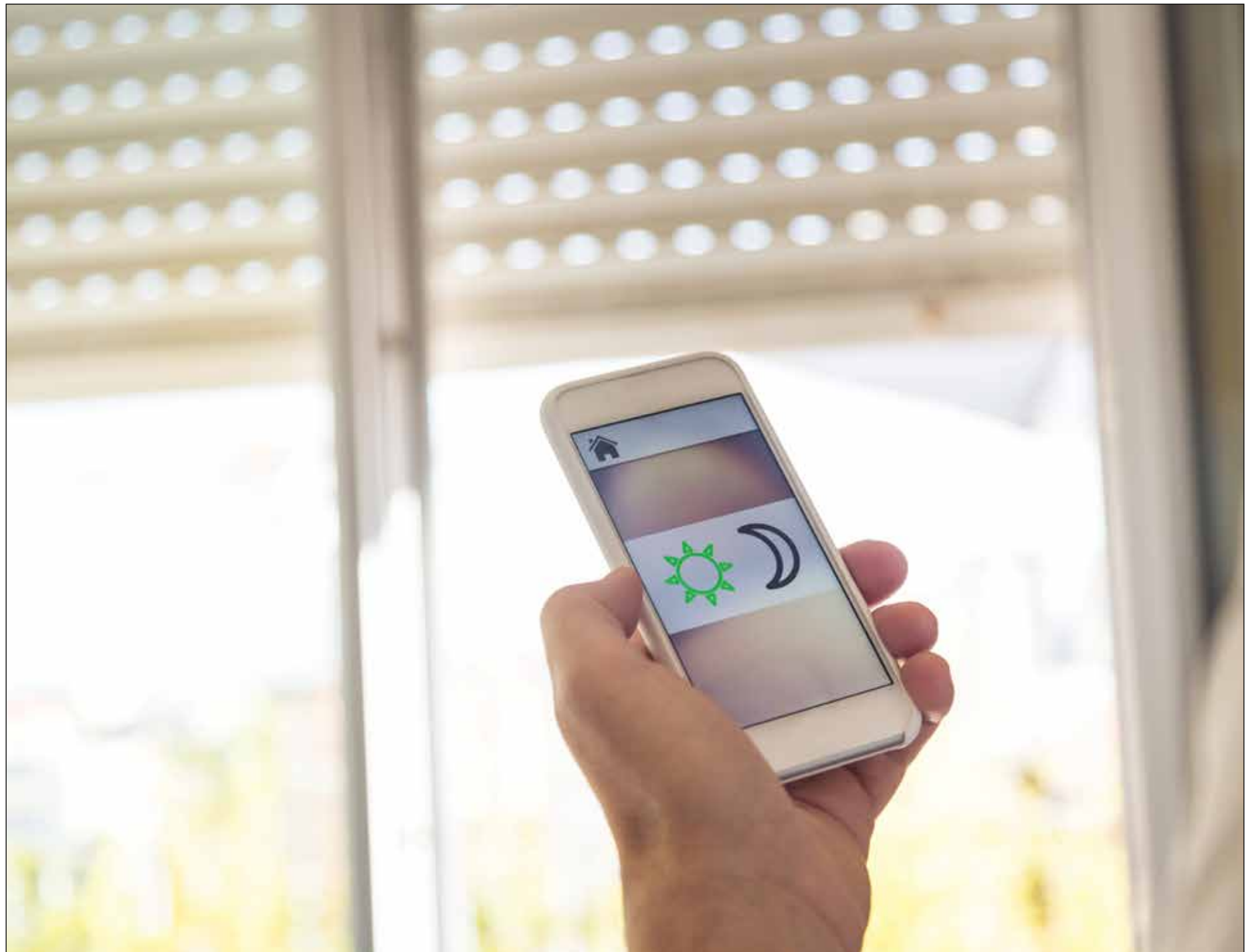
Advances in Window Coverings

Window coverings once came in white or neutral colors. Anything else was a custom style that was incredibly expensive.

Today's window coverings come in a huge variety of colors and styles. That's great news for your decor, but it can get pretty overwhelming. We're here to help.

HIGH-TECH COVERINGS

Yes, even our blinds are now smart. A variety of different rolling shades are now motorized and can even work with smart assistants like Alexa. You can also get motorized louvered blinds that control the tilt of the slats. These are great for high windows that you can't reach without a ladder. These blinds can be combined with other smarthome tech, such as smart lighting, to set certain scenes at certain times of day. For instance, your blinds could close when the sun hits certain parts of your home to keep it cooler but still let in natural light at other times of day.



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NATURAL ELEMENTS

Wicker and rattan, traditional blind materials, are coming back this year. You can also look for shade fabrics in natural fabrics like jute, sisal and bamboo. These organic materials add a warm, rich look to any room. Because these materials are so

light, if you're using them in bedrooms or other areas, you may want to order room darkening liners to go behind them.

FABRICS

You can let your window coverings pack a punch by using vintage and retro fabrics

on roller shades. Layer up these looks with curtains and drapes that accentuate your windows and provide a warm, textured look in your room. Keep your curtains simple and airy for more natural light. If you need a darker room, look for natural materials and monochromatic curtains in

straight folds. Also look for environmentally responsible fabrics, like those made from recycled materials.

PALETTES

Like in other areas, window coverings are trending in earthy, natural tones. Think cream, gray and rusty tones.

These create warm, inviting looks. Statement windows are also back in style, serving as focal points in the room instead of a bland way to keep the world out. Other trends making a splash this year are shades of blue, natural prints and textures, and vintage florals.

Choose the Right Mattress

There's a lot involved in a good night's sleep. What you do during the day counts: what you eat, what you drink, the things in your room such as electronics, your stress levels, medications.

One thing you may be overlooking is your mattress.

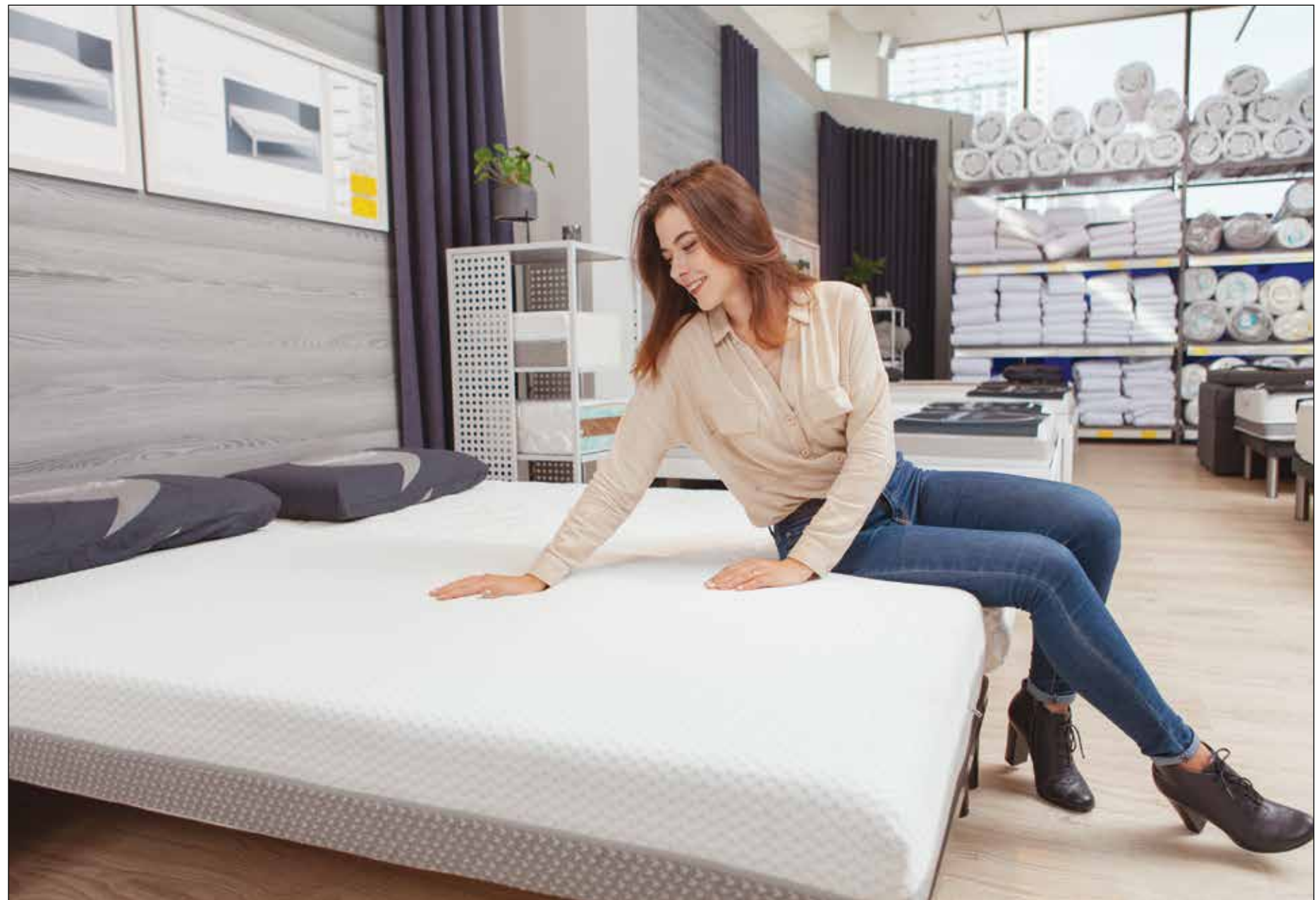
A GOOD NIGHT'S REST STARTS HERE

Arya Nick Shamie, MD, an associate professor of orthopedic surgery at Santa Monica UCLA Medical Center, told WebMD that a good mattress needs to support your body in a neutral position, where your spine has a nice curvature and your butt, heels, shoulders and head are supported in a proper alignment. If you can, test any potential new mattress in the store. Lay down in the position in which you normally sleep. Spend at least 10-15 minutes laying there — you can even bring your own pillow.

TYPES OF MATTRESSES

It helps to speak the lingo when you're shopping for a new mattress. Here are some types of mattresses you may see in the store.

- **Innerspring:** These mattresses support you with coil springs, usually individually



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enclosed. Experts say you don't really need a coil count more than 390, as the difference above that is so small you may not feel it. These kinds of mattresses may offer more support for overweight people and the firmer versions may be great for back pain.

- **Memory foam:** These mattresses are made from different densities of foam that respond to weight and tem-

perature. They contour to the specific shape of your body, reducing pressure points and potentially relieving pain. Memory foam also absorbs movement, so if you sleep with a partner, they can keep your partner from disturbing you. Because the foam reacts to body temperature, these mattresses can keep sleepers warm.

- **Air mattresses:** No, not the kind you use in the pool

or on camping trips. These beds look like a regular inner-spring mattress, but instead of coils, there are air chambers covered with a layer of foam. Air beds have long been used in medical settings and they can be adjusted for firmness. Couples who prefer vastly different mattresses might prefer these because, in larger mattress sizes, each side can be customized for different sleepers.

WHEN DO YOU NEED A NEW MATTRESS

Modern mattresses offer long-term warranties, but you shouldn't plan on keeping your mattress for as long as the warranty lasts. Our bodies change over time, and so may your sleeping preferences. Mattresses also collect dust mites, bacteria, fungus and other things over time, so consider buying a new mattress every 10-15 years.