

Homeowner entertains options for niche



PHOTOS COURTESY CINDY PAYNE

DEAR DESIGNER: I can't find an entertainment center to fit the niche in my family room. Some of the new ones offered don't fit and look awkward. What can I do? — Entertainment Center Challenged.

DEAR CHALLENGED: The cutouts that are often in tract homes can be perplexing. The idea of having a place for all your electronic equipment is a great one, however, when it is not built-in, it can look very messy.

I like to design and build entertainment centers in these niches. The cost is not much different than buying a nice piece of furniture and the look is worth every penny.

There are a couple ways to approach this project. For one, you can hire a company that specializes in building entertainment centers. There are many of these around town and they are quite educated in their specific field.

Another option is to hire a designer to draw your plans, write specifications and put his/her drawings out to bid. When you are getting bids, it's important to compare apples to apples. This is why a designer is a good option if you want to shop for the best price. But, as with everything, the best price is not always the best value. Check out references before you sign any deals.

A good craftsman will require you to purchase your television before he starts to work. Although the initial design can be laid out beforehand, the actual construction process is done only when final measurements are available



Cindy Payne
DEAR DESIGNER

to be sure of a perfect fit. When your entertainment center is completed, there shouldn't be much space around your television. This is a good fit and a good look.

Custom entertainment centers take between four and eight weeks to complete.

I designed the custom entertainment center shown in the accompanying photograph; it was built by a local company, Woodworks by Monday. The grooved accents on the right and left are pull-outs that store DVDs and videocassette recorder tapes. Together with your designer, you can plan all types of storage space that will meet your personal needs.

DEAR DESIGNER: I've heard interior designers and architects use the phrase "form follows function." What does that mean? — Out of the Lingo Loop.

DEAR LINGO LOOP: Form follows function is a concise way of saying that after determining the appropriate use or "function" of a room, that the layout or "form" of the room will develop naturally.

For example, you have a family room to decorate. The function of this room is family-oriented relaxation. This will be a place where the entire family will sit, lay and play. It will get a lot of use and it needs a television. It's important to have storage for video games, DVDs and videocassette recorder tapes. It's also wise to use durable fabrics and provide enough seating.

Now that we've established a function for the room, a logical progression can take place to develop the form, appearance or layout of the room. When you find the cable connection, you have also discovered which wall the television will be on. Although there are several ways to move these connections, they are often located with seating in mind.

After the television is selected and the entertainment and storage centers are built, the next thing will be to decide on seating. When you place the next largest item in your floor plan, such as the sofa, your spatial constraints will dictate the size and placement of additional chairs and tables.

Form follows function is the way many designers plan a room. It is a logical progression found in good design. When form follows function, you will see that your room is practical as well as lovely!

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Custom entertainment centers can be built into niches, above, to accommodate electronic equipment and provide storage options. The grooved accents at the outer edges are actually pull-out shelves. A ready-made unit, left, can look messy and awkward.

