

# GAME ON

Playrooms that **rock**

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Whether it's Scrabble, poker or air hockey, nothing brings people together like a little competition. And if that means silencing the cellphones, all the better. But getting everyone together for an unplugged evening can be challenging. That makes designing a game room as much about family as it is about fun.

The first rule of game room decor is that there are no rules. "Take a lot of risks," says Port Washington designer Keith Baltimore. "Be adventurous, and don't be boring. Make the room inviting enough that everyone wants to play a game."

The room should be conducive to play and be fun visually, even if someone isn't playing, he says. "Game rooms are about reverting back to your childhood and coming back to what is play and what takes you to that spot where you want to play," he says. Incorporating trophies, vintage game pieces and cheerful artwork into a space is not only playful but can help put people at ease, he says.

It's also important to have some practical considerations. Manhattan designer Joani Ziering says she asks clients to think about lighting, ventilation and even noise. "Think about having carpet for soundproofing, because some games are noisy, and sound carries," she says. Colorful accent rugs can help dampen sound while also setting the right mood. "Also, don't let your game room be dark," she cautions. "Think about having high hats and ceiling fans to move the air around. Track lights are also good if you can't recess the lights."

One way to inspire the family to use the game room is to get kids involved in decorating. "If you want your kids to hang out with you, the room should be child-friendly, and it should be

fun," says Locust Valley designer Susan Bloom. She says it's crucial to have a choice of activities in the room. "Bring a game in that the entire family can enjoy, like air hockey, or you could have a table that incorporates chess, checkers and backgammon that four people could pull up to very easily," she says. "It could even be a drop-leaf table, if it's for a small place."

In fact, a game room doesn't have to be a whole room. Bloom suggests that for smaller areas, families have a designated space, such as a cupboard or an armoire, filled with games. "It also keeps everything tidy, because games can be messy," she says.

Baltimore suggests using a bar cart for games if there's no space for a cabinet. "Wheel it into a corner and wheel it out when you're ready to play," he says.

**ON THE COVER** To accommodate eight children, this Cove Neck game room needs to have space for many pastimes. Below, a false armoire leads to the "Narnia" room.

## Room at the top

To accommodate eight children — ranging in age from about 18 months to 15 years, and including triplets — this Cove Neck game room, designed by Susan Bloom, needed to have room for many pastimes.

The 70-foot-long space, on the top floor of the family's home, is divided into several sections, each with its own purpose. The main space has various arcade games, table hockey and foosball. There's also a sleeper sofa in the room to encourage slumber parties. Then, behind red velvet draperies lies a small movie theater, complete with a large-screen television. Open a nearby armoire and, instead of clothes, there's a special hidden space inspired by C.S. Lewis' "Narnia" stories.



"I lined the floor with white shag carpets, and since it's on the third story of the house, it's not like they're coming in with muddy shoes," Bloom

says. "There's no furniture, just two white beanbags. It's an imagination room, with the trees and squirrels painted on the walls."