



There's a well-known saying ?First impressions count?, although after saying that there is another well used phrase ?Never judge a book by its cover?. Which ever school of thought you belong to, if you're houseproud your hallway is often the first thing that people see when visiting your home. If your house is reasonably styled and relatively tidy but your hallway resembles a scene from ?The War of the Worlds? then check out these tips on how to make an entrance. Hallways aren't always high on the list of decorating priorities but don't underestimate how important it is to get it right. The most important aspect is to make your hall as clutter-free, bright and inviting as possible.

Choosing a hallway colour scheme

A dark hallway says all the wrong things about your home. Use colour to make the entrance as light and appealing as possible. If your hallway is narrow or small, neutrals invariably work best. Don't be tempted to use a dark colour beneath a dado rail as it will make the walls look shorter and the space feel claustrophobic. The general advice is to steer clear of dark and bold colours however, as with all the best rules, there are exceptions. If your house is a large listed building or a grand period home, a deep traditional red or green will enhance the pedigree of the building and add enormous impact.

Maximise natural light in a small hallway

If your hall has a low ceiling, uplighters will give the impression of greater height. If you have lofty, high ceilings they're perfect for displaying feature lighting. Suspend globes of light from the stairwell or go for a luxe look with a beautiful chandelier.

Maximise natural light wherever possible. If your hallway is dark, a solid wood front door won't do you any favours. Could a glazier install glass panels to allow the light to flow? Alternatively, glazed interior doors will allow the light to bounce into your hallway. In smaller hallways, get rid of bulky window treatments or curtains around the doors; replace any dark chunky furniture with sleek, lighter alternatives. Reflective glossy white paint and hanging a mirror will reflect light, creating a more spacious feel in a small space.

Stylish hallway storage solutions

If there's a free corner in your hallway, consider a freestanding coat stand. The beauty of freestanding designs is that you can also slot umbrellas and walking sticks into the central area. It's also a good idea to have some chic padded hangers available. If you're short on space, your best bet is to hang coats from the wall. Choose a contemporary metal or plastic coat rack or go traditional with wood or a distressed paint finish. Coat racks with overhead shelves are invaluable for ensuring hats don't get battered in the morning mêlée. Alternatively, create your own hanging storage system by hanging all manner of funky hooks to create a quirky and abstract display of postcards, pictures, keys and coats.

Choosing hallway flooring design ideas

If you have floorboards, sand and paint or varnish them, then place matching runners on the stairs and hall floor to link the two spaces and provide a practical non-slip surface, too. A stylish stripe that echoes the colour of your floor varnish always looks good and draws the eye in so your hallway appears much longer than it really is. Painted floorboards in your hallway give the impression of greater floor surface by painting the skirtings the same colour as the floor. Be warned however, that floorboards painted a light colour can be particularly high-maintenance. If you only have a small hallway and are a talented DIY-er, you might want to buy individual floor tiles to create a pretty patterned floor. This is a great idea if you prefer to leave walls plain and add interest elsewhere. Include a border of simple tiles to create a stylish runner or rug effect. Feature flooring is a good way to 'create an impression'. Flooring needs to be durable. If you have a long hallway, a runner is very eye catching and a great way to inject colour while colourful and/or

striped carpet will instantly enliven a hallway.?

Choosing hallway furniture

Only store the absolute essentials in your hallway. Anything other than the bare minimum will get in the way of the morning scramble for bags, shoes and coats. A narrow console table is a good choice (one with a curved front edge will avoid those bruised hips!) but it can easily become a depository for drinks, newspapers and the morning's post, so beware of clutter! The slimline console table is a popular choice. It's ideal for the telephone, photographs, letters, keys etc. The classic incarnation is semi-circular with slimline drawers and elegantly carved legs.

Don't neglect the stairs

If you're decorating your hallway you may as well take the time to give your stairs some TLC as well. How is the carpet looking? With so much footfall, it may start to show signs or wear quicker than other areas of the house. When investing in a new one, choose hardwearing so it will look better for longer. If you have wooden stairs, you could add some colour and interest by painting a stair runner. This is a great contemporary look but be aware uncarpeted flooring is louder as there's nothing to absorb the sound of footsteps.