



Neat ideas

With the size of UK homes constantly shrinking, consumers are demanding space-saving functionality. We look at the latest storage solutions for compact kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms and offer some expert advice on how to plan your designs to maximise space

Siematic's Urban Kitchen dresser featuring cabinetry and appliances available from The Myers Touch



Lochanna's range of storage options are designed to allow your clients to hide away clutter

According to a 2018 study by the Local Authority Building Control (LABC), UK homes have never been smaller. The average kitchen measured at just 13.44sq m in the 2000s, compared with 13.79sq m in the 1990s, and 14.02sq m in the 1980s. Britain's living spaces are the smallest in Europe, and the 'shoe box home' is now considered the norm.

Drivers for dwindling space include population increases and the fact that more of us want to get on the property ladder, but there is also the fact that housebuilders are now building starter homes with significantly smaller footprints than in the past. They argue that if properties are to be affordable then they will be smaller, but critics

have accused the big housebuilders of lazy, unimaginative design, which often cuts corners to maximise profit.

With living spaces becoming smaller, clever storage is crucial and manufacturers are creating increasingly sophisticated solutions which maximise all available, and otherwise dead or unusable, space.

A clutter-free, tidy home, with everything in its proper place, is the dream for many. And this aspiration has been driven largely by Instagram lifestyle and interiors influencers such as Marie Kondo, Lindsey Queen of Clean and

Mrs Hinch, who have each garnered thousands of followers, all wishing to imitate their immaculate style in their own homes.

As well as this, it of course just makes practical sense to maintain order in a compact living space, for a more harmonious, calmer and less chaotic life.

So, starting in the kitchen, what are the key points designers need to



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Julia Steadman, commercial director at Brandt Design

consider and what practical advice can our contributors offer for those who are designing with, and installing, their products?

Firstly, consider everything that has to be stored within the space, and determine which elements are must-haves and whether there might be room for flexibility. Think about what can be on show and what might be better off hidden away – for example, bins – particularly in a small kitchen – can take up a lot of room, are unsightly and can create unwanted smells. With that in mind, it is probably worth integrating these into cabinetry.

In addition, small appliances could be stored away in a breakfast cupboard freeing up



Störmer's new midway unit ensures designers can maximise every centimetre

valuable worktop space and creating a more clutter-free, streamlined look.

As well as thinking about what can be hidden, designers often recommend display cabinetry – whether that be open shelves or glass-fronted. As well as helping to inject personality into the design, open shelving can also help the space feel bigger as you're not boxing it in (pun intended) with cabinets filling all of the wall space.

Mix and match

Rotpunkt UK head of UK operations, Matt Phillips adds: "By opting for an amalgamation of display and hidden storage over 'one-type design', you can create contrast, define different zones of the kitchen and offer varied height levels to limit the feeling

of confinement."

Next, think about where each item that needs to be stored can be placed in your design. As Nolte Kuchen southern area retail sales manager for the UK, Sarah Goebel notes: "It is very important to use every inch of the room. That includes the plinth right through to higher ceiling space. Also consider cabinets that have dual purpose to maximise on capacity."

Indeed, some brands offer plinth storage and high-capacity tall cabinets, as well as cabinets installed high up near the ceiling, which have become increasingly popular.

Häfele category manager, Adeline Baker comments: "Plinths can be fitted with floor-level vacuums that suck up dust, crumbs and debris from a kitchen floor, or hidden step ▶



A compact kitchen and living area, suitable for a town apartment or small household. The Nolte design features a combination of Manhattan in Volcanic Oak decor and Soft Lack in white soft matt lacquer

Häfele's Waste Boss Duo is a pull-out system which is secured to the cabinet floor and slides back in to keep bins out of sight and out of the way.



No room for a dining table, no problem!

When there is no space for a dining table in the kitchen, there are clever alternatives available including Hettich's Sliding Kitchen Island, which the brand demonstrated at its recent Xperiencedays events. A handy surface when closed, the Sliding Kitchen Island opens up to reveal a hob and food preparation area. The sliding top becomes the dining table, which might not be conveniently placed for daily life but is ideal for enjoying the meal itself. When the meal is over and the preparation area is cleaned, the tabletop and prep area become one again, saving valuable space.



stools, which come with a unique plinth bracket that attaches to a drawer-like front, so the stool can easily fit back under the plinth when not in use, totally hidden from sight. Similarly, lots of small kitchens are still blessed with high ceilings, so there's no reason not to build storage into those areas when pull-down systems make it easy to access those hard-to-reach places.

"Try to think multifunctionally, too. If limited room means a homeowner can't have a separate kitchen and dining area, a swivelling tabletop that doubles up as a sideboard will make maximum use of the space and give a feel of multiple rooms within one."

LochAnna kitchen category manager, Sinead Trainor, adds:

“**Space permitting, a slim drop-down table is a great addition, or alternatively, you could include a peninsula which also effectively extends the worktop**

Helena Myers, director at The Myers Touch in Winchester

"We are seeing a trend towards 'invisible kitchens' where the conventional parts are camouflaged and hidden. This means that the space retains its functionality whilst seamlessly continuing the theme of the rest of the house. The fashion for minimalism is achieved in a concealed kitchen by only displaying showpieces, such as smaller appliances like a food processor. Therefore, clever kitchen storage solutions are a must-have in these designs. Built-in elements, such

as the LochAnna Kitchens Elswick integrated pull out larder, can be used to hide away items that homeowners might not want to display."

Helena Myers, director at The Myers Touch in Winchester suggests using

the full height of the kitchen, and maximising cabinetry and shelving to the ceiling, which releases more area for the worktop. "Space permitting, a slim drop-down table is also a great addition, or alternatively, you could include a peninsula which also effectively extends the worktop."

On the subject of worktops, bear in mind that an island, though desirable, definitely isn't essential and there are alternatives. As Daniel Bowler, director of Eggersmann UK points out: "An island unit adds extra storage and

worktop space, but there's not always enough room to include one. If that's the case, consider opting for a smaller chef's table, for a more portable and practical solution. Similarly, swap out a dining table for a breakfast bar in an open-plan situation to help achieve a multi-functional design despite the compact size of the room."

In addition to dedicated storage units, some manufacturers have tweaked their furniture ranges to include more space by making them slightly taller. Pronorm has recently ▶



The run of Bronze Metal base units and custom full-height cabinets with integrated sideboard, from Rotpunkt, are designed to bridge the gap between kitchen and living areas

increased the carcass height of its cabinetry so that in addition to its 768mm high cabinets the company has an 832mm option, excluding the plinth, which it offers on its Proline128+, and Y-Line and X-Line handleless kitchen ranges.

National sales manager for UK and Ireland Richard Turner adds: "As worktops have trended design-wise to a more slimline 20mm thickness, this has created the opportunity for a slightly taller cabinet without compromising the ergonomic height of the worksurface – for just an extra 14mm the user gains a valuable 10% more storage space in each cabinet which, when multiplied across the entire kitchen, makes a meaningful difference."

Space-saving

Blum too has recently developed some really innovative and useful space-saving technology, with a number of products that it showcased in its 22m² concept home at its HQ in Austria. Solutions include the Space Step, which can be pulled out and used as a step to access higher cupboards, but also includes storage within it, and the Pull-Out Lock Shelf which can be pulled out and locked in place, creating extra worktop space.

Nolte's Goebel adds: "Often, there is more than one way of using a furniture element, and clever combinations achieved by thinking outside the box allow designers to make more of the space available."

Finally on the subject of kitchens,

Pronorm's Proline128+, X-Line+ and Y-Line+ cabinetry offers 10% more internal storage thanks to the option to increase the carcass height from 768mm to 832mm



Julia Steadman, commercial director at Brandt Design, gives some advice from a retailer's perspective. She says that answering a client's requests is typically one of the biggest challenges the company faces when designing compact kitchens.

"Initially, it's vital to establish exactly how the end user will be using the kitchen (including the fundamental island unit) on a daily basis and then look at the dimensions of the room. If you can determine essential functionality, it is easier to design for the space. For instance, swing doors

in a small kitchen may collide with, and potentially damage, appliances, as well as monopolise valuable space when in use. In this case, we recommend sliding or pocket doors as a way to increase space and user convenience, adding an average of 10sq ft of additional floor area when compared to a hinged door: which means they can work in almost any sized kitchen."

With bathrooms, designing for compact spaces tends to be easier as they are generally on the small side, and there are more design options

available. There is much greater room for flexibility when it comes to storage.

It's widely agreed that wall-hung options are a great solution because they free up floor space, helping to make the room look bigger. Short projection furniture and sanitaryware should also be considered as an option. Tall units meanwhile, are a great way of minimising on footprint while maximising on storage space.

Deep drawers within compact vanity units, such as this option by Roca's The Gap Collection, also makes storage easier, regardless of ▶



The slimline design of The Java, from Mereway Bathrooms, allows for maximum style and efficiency even in the smallest of spaces, the company says

available space. The units have a depth of 380mm and the lower drawers are deeper than conventional ones, allowing users to store bulky objects and make the most of their capacity.

Rak Ceramics sales and marketing director Ben Bryden comments that the secret to a successful design lies in choosing products, which are specifically designed with compact spaces in mind, and that a small room doesn't have to look cluttered or cramped if a few clever design tricks are employed.

Unlike kitchens, there isn't much that needs to be kept in the bathroom – toiletries, a couple of towels, perhaps some cleaning products. So, although storage is crucial, not as much of it is generally needed and it becomes more about how you enhance the space and make it feel bigger.

Offering some practical advice on how designers can create a small

bathroom design which feels spacious, our contributors generally agree that the key is to keep things simple and try not to pack too much into the room, which doesn't mean you can't add personality.

Armera's sales and marketing manager, Lizze Smart, recommends flat gloss surfaces, which offer the best light-reflective qualities, however Utopia's head of marketing Helen Clark asserts that when it comes to finishes, it's all about colour and texture.

She adds that the company is offering its widest colour choice ever from gentle, neutral shades through to dramatic blues and greens. "Don't be afraid to add colour, even in the smallest spaces," she continues. "A bold furniture finish can bring even the smallest room to life."

It can also pay to look for dead space in the planning stage or areas where niches can potentially be created. It might be worth losing a foot or two ▶



Don't be afraid to add colour and texture, even in the smallest spaces. A bold furniture finish can bring even the smallest room to life
Helen Clark, head of marketing, Utopia



Furniture from The Gap collection by Roca



Roseberry fitted furniture from Utopia in Rose Quartz demonstrating the use of colour in a small room, while maximising the corner space

from the shower enclosure area if a stud wall can be installed and some niches created, as these are a really aesthetically pleasing, seamless and practical way of adding storage into that area.

Under-bath or integrated bath storage can also be a great option for storing items such as cleaning products and spare toilet rolls.

Compact bedrooms

On to bedrooms now and fitted furniture can again provide some useful options for making the most of all available space. Built-in storage around the bed is sometimes considered old-fashioned but there are furniture brands, such as Daval, Crown Imperial, PWS and Symphony, creating stylish and practical solutions. Built-in sliding door wardrobes are also a great go-to for organising clothes and shoes.

Simon Bodsworth, managing director at Daval Furniture comments: "Fitted furniture creates significantly more storage thanks to its tailor-made qualities, which provide up to three times more space depending on application. Furniture that is designed to specific user and space requirements will ultimately work

harder and be more efficient. Practical storage solutions have therefore come into their own and become just as important as exterior styling, with unique interior options like 'his and her' drawer fittings that provide innovative compartments, hanging rails, shoe and trouser racks and specialist pull-out shelving to suit individual lifestyles proving popular."

Offering some design advice, Josie Medved, design manager at Symphony Group adds: "In a small bedroom, consider using another space such as an adjoining box room as a dressing area and in any room, having a specific place to store every item will make the most of the compact space. Lighting is another important consideration. Design for plenty of task lighting in all rooms, choose lighter colours to make the room feel bigger and before planning, get a brief from the client and discuss their needs and lifestyle so you have a good idea of how they use their space and which elements are important to their everyday living."

Looking ahead, it seems the market for compact storage solutions across the kitchen, bedroom and bathroom markets are likely to grow further as living spaces continue to shrink ►

BELOW: The modular 'Framework' furniture range from Bathrooms to Love features deep and spacious drawer compartments, an integrated shelf below for additional storage and a side hook for towels. The ceramic inset basin also features a spacious top surface area



Top tips

Vado offers some advice for maximising space in bijou bathrooms

1 MAKE A STATEMENT WITH TILES

Tiles are an ideal way to create a feature in a small space through a pop of colour, fresh pattern or unconventional shape. If you are planning on keeping the wall décor simple, statement floor tiles are a great way to add some personality to a compact area.

2 REFLECT LIGHT USING MIRRORS

Mirrors are an essential addition to small bathrooms, to create the illusion of space and light. Line the wall behind the basin with mirrored tiles or add extra storage with a mirrored cabinet.

3 STAND OUT ACCESSORIES

The addition of decorative accessories can make even the smallest of spaces look different. Complement your bathroom fittings and fixtures with a matching toilet roll holder, toilet brush and soap dish in the same shade and finish as the room. Encourage your client to complete their design by carefully selecting hand towels that complement the chosen décor.

4 MAXIMISE SPACE

Vanity units add functionality whilst neatly optimising the available space. Creating essential storage, reducing clutter and helping to keep the focus on decorative elements. A floating vanity unit not only increases storage space it will also help to make the room appear bigger.



Crown Imperial combines its Furore bedroom and Lifespace storage collection to make a small bedroom framed centrepiece. This tiered design makes it organised and allows easy access to everyday essentials.

and as our demand for additional bathroom spaces, such as en-suites and cloakrooms, grow.

Rak Ceramic's Ben Bryden and Roca Group (UK) head of marketing David Bramell agree that, because of our need for more small bathrooms, furniture solutions will become more varied, more innovative, more adaptable, "and



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Josie Medved, design manager, Symphony Group

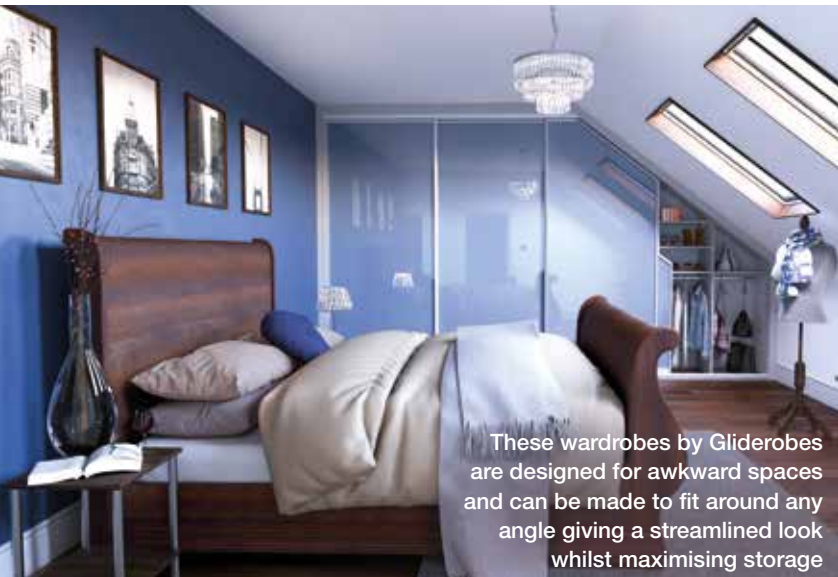
perhaps even smart," adds Bramell, "evolving to support its users in this increasingly connected world."

Where kitchens are concerned, there is a growing demand for flexible spaces with clever, adaptable storage as dwellings continue to become more

diminutive and we tend to demand more multifunctional use of those rooms.

"And it's not only the size of our homes that's changing; the people who live in them, and the way we use them is changing, too," Hafele's Adeline Baker adds: "Experts predict that a rise in multigenerational living will see the number of UK households headed by someone over the age of 65 rise by 54 per cent by 2041.

"Against these socio-economic patterns, it's more important than ever for homeowners to know an investment into a kitchen will make the most of every square metre available. Final decisions must offer a mix of practicality with appliances, fixtures and fittings, multi-functional capabilities for the different parts of our lives and ultimately, style, in line with popular interior trends. So, designers need to think of solutions which equally save space, but also cater for the changes to the traditional family make up and still look great." **kbb**



These wardrobes by Gliderobes are designed for awkward spaces and can be made to fit around any angle giving a streamlined look whilst maximising storage



Glide Nebula bedroom furniture in Matt Indigo by Symphony Group



ABOVE: Daval's Drawer Inserts are made from eco-leather and are available in four formats: jewellery tray, earring tray, watch holder, and multi-purpose dividing tray