



This photo provided by HGTV.com shows a boy's bathroom designed by Brian Patrick Flynn featuring framed children's art on the walls, perfect for displaying all the newest kids artwork coming in. — AP photos



This photo shows a home work space designed by Tamara Eaton featuring an oversized pin-board extending all the way to the ceiling, perfect for displaying all the newest kids artwork coming in.

## Four ideas for hanging on to school-year memories and artwork

On crisp September afternoons, kids often come home from school bearing armfuls of classroom art. The evenings often bring comments about their day's events and sometimes hilarious descriptions of their world. Parents are sure they'll save and remember all those paper creations and memorable words. But the pace of life soon takes over, and even organized moms and dads can end up inundated.

It's worth creating a system to manage the flow because school artwork can quickly pile up, says Laura Russell, founder of the craft blog makelifelovely.com and a mother of four. With just a bit of creative effort, you can also find ways to hold onto all those funny comments you'll want to remember years from now. As a new school year begins, here are four easy projects to help do that:

### 1. Follow them with photos

You can build on the trend of snapping and posting "first day of school" photos by adding written notes in your kids' own handwriting, says Kayla Kitts, special projects editor at HGTV.com. Take a photo on that first day, and that evening have kids write out a page listing their current dreams and favorites. Include five or 10 questions about anything you'd like: the career they'd love to have someday, their favorite school lunch, best friend, favorite class. Have them write it out in their own handwriting to preserve that too, says Kitts. Then scan or photograph the page.

Do the same on the day before their December holiday break, and again during the final week of school. Then supplement those three photos and images of their written surveys with other photos from school events or candid shots with

friends, or scans of their school artwork. Lay it all out in a photo book you can order online. "It's a really cool book to give grandparents," Kitts says, and is a keepsake your child will enjoy in the future. At the end of elementary school, you can easily create a book that includes these photos and written comments as a gift to a special teacher.

### 2. Winnow their work

Russell begins each year by setting aside a big file-folder box for each child. She labels one hanging folder for each month, with some spaces in case files fill up before a month ends. If that level of organization sounds too ambitious, keep a large plastic bin handy. "Stuff all the art in there," Russell says, and go through it periodically, asking each child which pieces are their favorites.

Once you've pared things down to their favorites and yours, Russell suggests slipping the art into plastic sleeves in a three-ring binder. Her kids love thumbing through their binders from past school years.

"While I'm in charge of the books now and don't let the kids pull them out unless I'm sitting with them, I plan on giving them their books when they're older," she says. Another suggestion for storing and celebrating art: "Scan the favorite pieces as they come home. From those scans you can make a slideshow for each year of school," Russell says. "Life is short, and the artwork that comes home right now can be a wonderful way to tie generations together."

### 3. Save their sayings

Buy a paper date book for each child (it can be for the current calendar year or for the 18 months that begin in July and

run through the end of next year). Make sure the book offers writing space for each day - ideally half a page. Keep the book in a high-traffic spot at home with a pen attached. When one of the kids says something that you'll want to remember, write it on that day's page. Then, during the weekends, ask your child to describe the previous week at school. If they wish, they can also draw pictures. It's a wonderfully analog way to preserve a school year in our digital world.

A twist on that: Kitts suggests keeping a few glass jars around the house, along with slips of blank paper and a pen. When your child thinks of something they want to preserve, have them jot it down, write the date on it and put it in a jar. You can do the same. Whether it's a jar, book or even a note typed into your phone, "just write down those precious memories now," Russell says. "We think we'll never forget those precious words and how old our kids were when they said them, but the fact is that we do forget."

### 4. Have a rotating display of their art in their rooms

Kitts suggests hanging a few empty frames in various sizes filled with a thin sheet of cork on your child's bedroom wall. Place pushpins in the corners of each frame. When your child brings home art they're excited about, pin it into a frame. The pins make it easy to rotate artwork in and out.

If the walls are already full, try hanging a length of twine and use clothespins to hang a rotating selection of school artwork. Useful move as the year wears on: Each time you reach into the bin of creations to select something new to display, choose a few items to discard. — AP

## Ask a Designer: Snazzy staircases

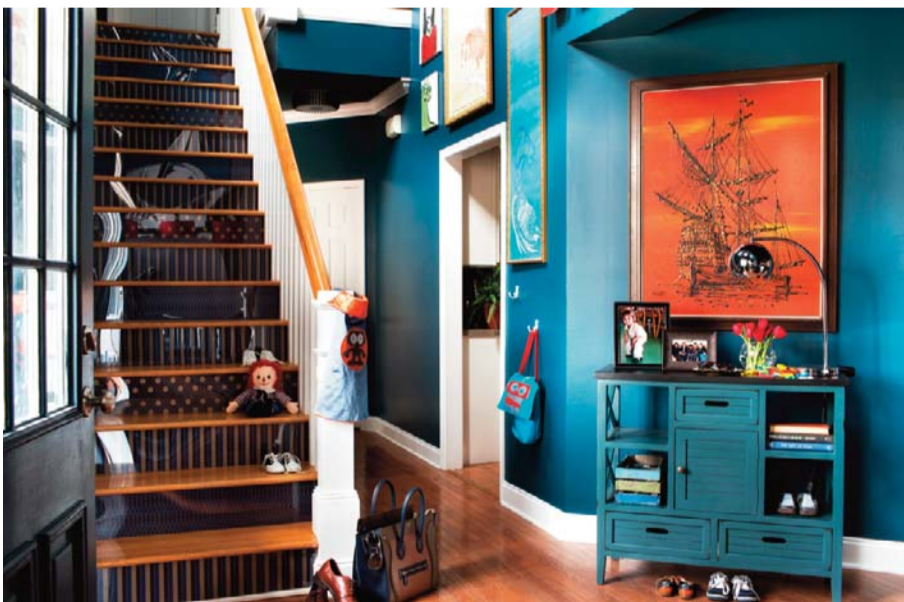


Photo provided by Brian Patrick Flynn shows a staircase designed by Flynn for HGTV.com. In this entryway the stair risers are wallpapered in contrasting patterns, bringing a dose of style and personality to a space that is often overlooked in many homes. — AP photos



Photo provided by Bradfield and Tobin, shows a striking staircase designed by the New York-based design firm Bradfield and Tobin which has leather treads on the stairs rather than traditional carpet.

We give lots of thoughts to decorating rooms but often overlook the staircase, despite the fact that in many homes it's the first thing people see when they walk in the door. Staircase areas can be "a great spot to introduce your personal style," says Brian Patrick Flynn, who designed HGTV's "Dream Home 2016," the design network's annual house giveaway.

A bold paint color that might be overpowering in a large living room can be perfect used on the tiny risers between steps. And a rug pattern that "might seem kind of wild in a room" can add a nice pop of style when used as a slender runner down the center of a staircase, says Bethany Willard, lead designer and founder at the Pittsburgh-based interior design firm Studio 1049. "The simplicity of a staircase allows for a bit of fun," she says. Here, Flynn, Willard and designer Roric Tobin of the New York design firm B&T Global share advice on creating an inviting, stylish staircase that blends with the rest of a home's decor.

### Assess the banister

It doesn't have to be expensive to replace a boring banister with something snappier. "If it's something historical that has beauty, there's no sense in ripping it out," Tobin says. But if it doesn't serve the space, change it. Or consider painting or otherwise updating the banister. "Just putting some thought into that detail, Willard says, "can really personalize the space."

### Showcase your favorites

"Stairwells, often considered dead space, are ideal for showcasing collections," says Flynn. "I prefer to mix different frames in a variety of wood finishes and metals, and then throw in three-dimensional objects as well to break up the rigid lines. "When all else fails, I say stick with black-and-white photos, and if you're using art, pay close attention to how palettes play between each piece. If you have 11 pieces and eight of them have similar palettes, maybe use the other three in a different room."

For an entrance stairway, Tobin suggests aiming for a look that's appealing but not overpowering. Perhaps three or four prints by the same artist, he says, that form "a cohesive, pared-down collection ... not too distracting."

### Embrace bold patterns and color

Tobin recommends using bold, large-scale print wall coverings to "really draw your eye up the staircase." Homeowners often assume that small-print patterns will look best, he says, but they can be boring. One option he likes is a flocked wall covering with some metallic sheen, which offers warmth and classic style but can also look contemporary if the print is modern.

Bold patterns are also great for stair risers (the portion of the stairway perpendicular to the steps). You can stencil a pattern on the risers with paint, which can easily be painted over if you decide the pattern isn't for you. Or paint them one or several rich colors.

Willard has a client who chose to paint her risers in various shades of green - lightest at the top and darkest at the bottom, in a sort of ombre effect. Flynn is a fan of wallpapering risers, then covering each one with a sheet of clear acrylic for durability. And if you're sure that patterned risers are for you, go for an even more permanent approach by adding ceramic tile work in a pattern you love.

### Blend style and function

Runners and stair treads are another place to add color or pattern. "Stairwell runners in masculine prints are becoming popular in all sorts of homes," says Flynn. And they serve a practical purpose: Bare wood can look good but be noisy and slippery. Most of Tobin's clients opt for stair runners or treads to eliminate noise. These are traditionally made of carpet, but Tobin suggests considering other materials. For a client in Mexico City, he added leather stair treads.

### Finishing touches

Make sure lighting fixtures are right for your staircase and that the light is flattering, Willard suggests. "That can be such an inexpensive change and an update that makes a lot of difference," she says. And you don't have to wait for the winter holidays to add decorations. As summer ends, consider "adding a touch of fall with baskets at the end of the stairs in autumnal tones," says Flynn, "then keeping sweaters and knit caps out as accessories." — AP

## Paris: An obstacle course for wheelchair users

Damien Birambeau has spent most of his life in a wheelchair-and for most of that time he has had trouble getting around Paris, his home town. Despite being one of the world's top tourist destinations, the French capital is a veritable obstacle course for people in wheelchairs-tourists and residents alike. Compared to London, where one in four Underground stations have step-free access, Paris lags far behind in efforts to accommodate people with reduced mobility. "Some people just abandon the idea of going out," said the 43-year-old Birambeau, who suffers from muscular dystrophy.

Tucked away on a side street in eastern Paris are the offices of J'Accede, Birambeau's startup that helps people locate accessible sites and businesses in and around the capital. "When I was six, we knew something was wrong with me. At age 10, I was in a wheelchair," said Birambeau, whose spacious ground-floor office doubles as his home. Of the city's 16 Metro lines, only line 14 — the newest one, opened in 1998 — is completely accessible with lifts and step-free access for wheelchair-bound people. The city's transport authority RATP says that while stairs make most Metro stations off limits to the disabled, the situation is better with buses and commuter trains. "All of the buses in Paris are accessible, meaning 70 percent of their stops are accessible for people in a wheelchair," Marie Christine Raoult, RATP's accessibility specialist, told AFP.

### 'Invisible'

Many businesses are not adapted for wheelchair users in a city where steps abound, notably at entrances, and Paris's many old historic buildings pose daunting architectural challenges to efforts to render them accessible. Birambeau's own family was forced to move to an apartment building with a lift when he was a child. And the accessibility issue prevented him from attending the same school as his brother. "I was the only one in a wheelchair," he said. "At the time, people weren't used to handicapped people. We were invisible in a way."

Since the 1970s, people like Birambeau have become more "visible" and the government has taken note. In February 2005, it passed a law guaranteeing rights for the disabled, who today make up nearly one-fifth of France's 65 million residents. The new legislation was hailed as a turning point, notably for the two to three percent disabled who are wheelchair-bound-about 400,000 people.

And while the situation has improved with specially adapted public toilets, handicapped parking places and an official, multilingual website listing parks, theatres, cinemas, stores, swimming pools and other accessible city facilities-progress has been slow. The 2005 law led to requirements for businesses to make their premises more accessible, said Paris-based disability lawyer Alexandra Grevin. Firms were given 10 years-until 2015 — to submit their accessibility plans, he said, and then another three years to implement them, installing ramps and other physical adaptations.

### 'A vicious cycle'

Yet still, "nine out of 10 shops are not accessible," said Charlotte de Vilmorin, founder of Wheeliz, a Paris-based organization that helps people find adapted vehicles around France. "Paris is one of the most difficult places to live in a wheelchair," said the 26-year-old, who has been in one all her life. While many want to make their shops more accessible, she said, the stringent requirements for access ramps, handle bars and other details are not easy to meet during an economic slump. "Wheelchair users just can't go out, so people do not see wheelchair users."

Because they do not see them, they do not see the need for accessibility," she said. Sometimes, "when I call a shop to ask if it is accessible they don't know, because they don't even know what accessible means." Both Vilmorin and Birambeau are clearly filling a niche as their businesses thrive. Launched in May 2015, Wheeliz now has 2,700 subscribers and in January it won a 50,000 euro (\$56,000) social innovation prize from the European Commission. "It's a universal need-to be able to go wherever you want," Vilmorin said. — AFP



This file photo shows a disabled man in a wheelchair distributing flyers at the top of a metro station stairs in Paris. — AFP