



PLANNING OR DESIGNING A HOME GAME ROOM OR POOL TABLE BILLIARD ROOM

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Make Your Home a Place to Play

The fact is, we're staying home more. Why? The motivations are as diverse as our Canadian mosaic. In the last few months, external factors like the cost of gasoline, a slower economy and rotten weather have played their parts. Add to these headaches the growing recognition of our personal carbon footprints. The time has come to make some really potent lemonade from today's lemons by creating retreats for ourselves and friends so enticing that home and fun are synonymous!

Designers have it down to a fine art or, more precisely, a craft. Sharpen that pencil, gather the family, your cats and dogs, (well, they like fun and games, too, don't they?), and create a master list of all the things each individual likes to do best. Then, as a group, identify attainable priorities. If you've not already done so, now's the time to take a good look at the space designated for these activities. Why not call it "The Game Room?" Post a sign on the door. High on the list, you'll probably discover, is an entertainment centre and appropriate seating. If there's a fireplace (or you decide to install one) there's a new approach hatched by Hooker Furniture, pier cabinets on either side of the mantle for component, speaker and media storage when a flat panel TV is hung over the fireplace. More conventionally, credenzas can be as costly or inexpensive as you like or can afford, multiple choice!

Try for ergonomic seating. Handsome and comfy it should be, but recognize long-term factors as well. Hassocks constructed for storage as well as feet, or a trunk that doubles as a coffee table, can hold that plethora of remotes. And snacks! 10 years ago people would buy a pool table, put it in the centre of a room, and that was that. "Now they want a games room, "There's a big difference." Women are getting into the mix as well, taking on an influential role in the game room's décor, mostly because it's part of the home's décor now and not just a corner in the basement. "When people come in our stores they are interested in purchasing a pool table, but combining it with home bars, poker tables, and maybe a game table for the children".

Home bars have surged in popularity in the past couple years after becoming nearly obsolete in the 1980s and 1990s. Possibly attributed to increasing concerns about drinking and driving, as well as a reaction to Ottawa's smoking bylaws, which have made smoking in bars and restaurants illegal. He also notes that new homes that are being built have more space now, and that the recent rise in popularity can also be attributed in part to the cocooning trend.

But there can be no generalizing what people want for their homes. Each customer is different. Some people come for the billiard tables; some come for the bar. People who come in the store to buy a pool table often buy a bar or poker table at the same time to complete their game room, or they will come back a few months or a year later. Sales of poker tables have also been strong, as well as short pool cues called "Trouble Shooters" that allow people to enjoy playing pool in slightly less space.

So re-sharpen your now rather blunt pencil, and draw a plan. No, you don't need the skills of Frank Lloyd Wright, but it is a good idea to measure your Room carefully and consider logical allocations of space, a "zone" for each activity. Don't forget to indicate doors, windows, skylights and also bathroom availability. Storage is a true necessity for all those boxed board games, playing cards, tiles and chessmen. And the vital rule books and dictionaries! Open shelves are best here for easy access, perhaps equipped with baskets to contain small items.

Craft materials will figure importantly on some family's lists, and drawers on casters as well as shelves are recommended by thoughtful designers "to contain some of the mess." Here's a good place to insert a word of caution. Don't be preoccupied with tidiness. Have reasonable "put-away" rules, but remember this is a FUN and Games Room.

The family's budding artist must have a well-lit spot, large enough to leave an easel unfolded beside a small table/cabinet with many drawers to contain paints, pastels, palette knives and brushes. If the area is equipped with a closet, consider taking off the doors to provide a home for a recreational computer, its components and seating. Or, if the closet's deep enough, leave the doors on and close them when other pastimes are underway. Good place for a small file cabinet, too, and maybe a tiny 'fridge. And make sure to keep cords and wires tucked safely away.

Make provision for quiet times, the readers. Harden Furniture has crafted a neat book table that won't dominate, will carry a lamp and tea mug, and sit nicely beside a comfy chair. And do make sure there are plenty of plugs and jacks placed where needed, and ensure that both task and overhead lighting are there for each zone. Remember that, above all, this is a FUN Room. Collections that don't fit anywhere else in the house can find a perfect home here, model cars, cast iron banks, seashells, mustard pots, sports memorabilia, ancient postcards, movie posters, all part of your family's highly distinctive mix. Enjoy!

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