

# Top Shelf: Tips for Choosing & Styling Shelves

By Designer Diana Bastone



Do your empty shelves have you feeling... unfulfilled? Does the design and decorating seem daunting? You're not alone. When it comes to our homes, many mistakenly "shelf" their shelves in favour of more exciting design additions, like furniture and tech toys. But the truth is, the right shelving can enhance a home's function and its style.

Despite their primary purpose of storage and organization, shelves are much more than just functional pieces of furniture; they are also powerful design elements that can transform the look and feel of your home. Whether you opt for open shelving to showcase your favourite items, or custom-built shelves to maximize the corners and crannies, your choices can significantly impact your home's overall aesthetic.

## Choosing the Right Shelves

Before you can start styling, ensure you have the right shelves for your space. Consider the following factors:

**Functionality:** Assess the purpose of the shelves. Are they primarily for storage, display or a combination of both? If storage is a priority, consider closed cabinets or a mix of open and closed shelving to hide clutter while showcasing your favorite pieces. Also consider your own organizational style. If you're messy, closed shelving might be the more practical option.

**Space and Scale:** Measure the available space where the shelves will be installed to ensure a proper fit. Pay attention to the scale

of the room. In smaller spaces, floating shelves can create the illusion of more space, while larger rooms can accommodate substantial bookshelves or custom-built units.

**Material and Style:** Choose materials that complement your existing decor. Wood adds warmth, while metal or glass can lend to a more modern look. Also consider the style of your home – whether it's contemporary, traditional, or eclectic – and select shelves that align overall with that aesthetic.

**Open Shelving:** Open shelving has gained popularity for its ability to create an airy and visually appealing display, while keeping certain items easily on hand. Just remember that with this design choice, curation is key.

**Custom Shelving:** Custom shelving allows you to maximize space and tailor the design to your specific needs. Here are some tips for creating custom shelves:

**Built-In Versatility:** Design built-in shelves that cater to the unique features of your home, such as alcoves or corners. Incorporate a mix of open and closed storage to maintain a balance between showcasing items and hiding clutter.

**Multi-Functional Design:** Integrate shelves with additional features like built-in desks, entertainment centers, or seating to maximize functionality. Ensure that your custom shelves are proportionate to the room and serve a dual purpose without overwhelming the space.

## The Art of Accessorizing

Now that you have the right shelves in place, some thoughtful accessorizing will finish the look. Start with a cohesive colour palette for the items you'll be displaying. This creates a unified and visually pleasing look. Introduce pops of colour or bold black accents through decorative items like vases, books and artwork to create visual interest.

I like to incorporate a variety of textures, such as ceramics, woven baskets and metallic accents, to add depth and tactile appeal into my interiors. Experiment with different materials to strike a balance between smooth and rough surfaces for a more dynamic look.

Mix and match items of varying heights, shapes, and textures to add interest and prevent monotony. Achieve balance by distributing items evenly on each shelf. Consider symmetry in terms of both placement and visual weight. Finally, experiment with the arrangement – alternating between vertical and horizontal stacks can create a dynamic and organized appearance.



*Diana Bastone is the Principal Designer and founder of Toronto based Diana Bastone Designs. The firm has become known for creating stylish, and thoughtfully tailored livable interiors. The firm provides full service residential design servicing GTA, Toronto Ontario. dianabastonedesigns.com @dianabastonedesigns*

Choosing and styling shelves is a creative process that allows you to showcase your personality and enhance the overall style and function of your home. Whether you opt for the openness of floating shelves, the customization of built-ins, or a combination of both, the key lies in thoughtful curation and a keen eye for design. By carefully selecting the right shelves and accessorizing with colour and texture, you can transform your home into a space that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing.

