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4 Mistakes You Should Never Make When Mixing Patterns, According To Designers

Who else is guilty of #2?

By [Quincy Bulin](#) | Published on October 3, 2023



PHOTO: PHOTO: HELEN NORMAN; STYLING: LIZZIE COX

The art and science of pattern mixing can be intimidating, but the end result is always worth it. "Patterns are an amazing way to incorporate your story into a space," says Katie Kime, founder of [her namesake lifestyle brand](#) described as "a world of prints and personalization." "We all live a storied life —why should we limit ourselves to just one accent that expresses it?"

Incorporating multiple patterns can create a far more dynamic space, one that often feels more enjoyable and balanced when done right. For as many "do's" and "don'ts" as there are, Kime considers one truth to be the most important: "Trust your eyes—if you're looking around the room and your eyes can't relax and enjoy the mix you've created, something isn't working. But that shouldn't make you scared to try."

MEET THE EXPERT

Katie Kime is the designer and founder of [Katie Kime](#) in Austin, Texas.

Bailey Ward is the designer and founder of [Bailey Ward Interiors](#) in Atlanta, Georgia.

Audrey Scheck is the designer and founder of [Audrey Scheck Design](#) in Austin, Texas.

Emily Brown is the designer and founder of [Emily Lauren Interiors](#) in Austin, Texas.

If you're someone who thrives with a rulebook and need a little more guidance though, keep reading. We talked to three Southern design experts about the four mistakes to avoid when playing the pattern game.

Don't Pick More Than One Hero

"When I'm designing a space, I typically start with one pattern and let it be the hero. Everything else is built on that," says Bailey Ward, founder of [her namesake interior design firm](#) in Atlanta, Georgia. "Your patterns should never compete but should work in tandem to create an interesting, yet cohesive space."

This means that while pattern mixing is a statement itself, there should only be one that makes the biggest statement. When you're picking the others, make sure they all relate back to the hero.

Don't Throw Patterns Together

Pattern mixing requires a level of thought and balance. "It's easy to overwhelm a space if you aren't thoughtful about pairings," explains Audrey Scheck, founder of [her namesake interior design firm](#) in Austin, Texas.

"One piece of advice we offer is to avoid combining patterns that share a very similar scale," share Ashley Hunte and Becca Frasier, co-founders of interior design firm Casa Sisu in Austin, Texas. "It's generally better to pair a smaller-scale pattern with a medium-to-large-scale one." The eye should travel, but *not* because it doesn't know where to look first.

For example, Ward says, "if you start with a large-scale floral, try pairing it with a small-scale geometric or ticking stripe. If your club chairs are upholstered in a print, then use a solid pillow."

Don't Use Too Many Colors

One of the rules Scheck follows? "Always stick to a cohesive color palette," she says.

Emily Brown, founder of [Emily Lauren Interiors](#) in Austin, Texas, recommends you "keep it simple to avoid sensory overload." Even when dealing with solids, too many hues can be overwhelming, so you have to be extra careful with patterns. If mixing patterns is new to you, consider going tonal so it's a little more intuitive.

Don't Overdo It

Brown calls this embracing a "less is more ethos." Her max number of patterns is three, while Ward's is four or five. In your home, the number may be dependent on how large the space is, how busy the patterns are, and if your style leans more minimalist or [maximalist](#).

One of the ways Kime advises softening the impact of pattern mixing is to "choose a grounding base and build whimsical accents on top of it." This also makes it easier to switch things up later on, whether it's because you've discovered a new pattern you want to incorporate, you like to [decorate for the holidays](#), or your style is in transition.

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