

## 7 Items You Should Always Buy Vintage, According to Designers

**Vintage and antique items are an easy way to add charm, character and patina to your home. From wood furniture to glassware, here are the things designers say they prefer to buy vintage over new.**

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Vintage and resale furniture sales hit a record high last year, and experts only think the trend will continue to grow. For starters, vintage furniture can be an incredibly worthy investment, and give your home a one-of-a-kind look that others won't have.

"Decorating with vintage items adds character, uniqueness, and history that is often difficult to achieve with mass-produced items," says Sara Swabb, interior designer and founder of Georgetown-based interior design firm Storie Collective. "Using vintage pieces can be a conversation starter and way to infuse your personal heritage, style, and memories into a space." Swabb says that vintage items "often have a quality and craftsmanship that is not often found in new items at a similar price point." Not to mention, you're upcycling older items, which is a more sustainable way to shop—and so better for the environment!

But first, what qualifies as vintage? According to Melinda Trembly, interior designer and founder of Rincon Rd Design Studio, anything 40 years or older can be vintage, while anything 100 years or older is antique. "I would say that certain items from the '80s are slipping into that vintage market now, too," she adds.

Aside from simply adding character to a space, designers also agree that there are some items that are always better to purchase vintage for reasons that go far beyond aesthetics—such as better quality of materials, affordability, sustainability, and more. While not all older furniture pieces and accessories are worth foraging through flea markets or antique stalls for, designers share the pieces that *are*, so that you know how to best invest in your space.

## Things You Should Be Buying Buy Vintage Instead of New

### Oil Paintings

To really stand out from the crowd (read: avoid having the same mass-produced prints as everyone else), designers suggest looking for original vintage artwork. “While they might be more on the expensive side, older paintings tend to have a piece of history you won’t find in more modern paintings,” says Trembley.

Consider looking through stores for paintings that aren’t always in the best condition: Not only does character lie in those not-so-perfect finishes, but that beautiful portrait might be worth quite a bit of money someday! If an item calls to you and it has a few scratches and nicks on it, Trembley recommends not to forget about it so quickly. You can always find an art restoration company to help you get it looking good as new again.

### Rugs

Trust us: Antique rugs have *major* resale value, even if they’re worn. As long as the entire rug is worn evenly, it’ll still make a major statement in your home. “I truly believe that vintage rugs are better than all new rugs, adds Swabb. “They’re tightly handwoven and vegetable-dyed—meaning they are some of the most durable rugs on the market. In addition, since no machines or chemicals were used in their production, they generally last longer.” Swabb suggests using vintage rugs in any and every space, including kitchens and dining rooms, as well as high-traffic entry and hallways.

Just make sure that the rug has been well taken care of (think: no exposure to bright light or pet odors), and it shouldn’t have been washed with harsh chemicals. This will make sure your vintage rugs last for as long as they possibly can. [Our guide to cleaning rugs](#) can help keep yours in tip-top shape for years to come.

## Wooden Tables or Bed Frames

Okay, maybe you don't want wooden furniture that's been eaten away by termites, but overall, wooden tables and bed frames are a must when it comes to items you should consider buying vintage. "I generally prefer buying items like wooden dining and side tables—as well as bed frames—over new because they're more likely to be made from solid wood," says Brooke Lang, principal designer and owner of Chicago-based interior design firm Brooke Lang Design. "Newer pieces, on the other hand, are more commonly made from laminate, veneer, or other synthetic materials that don't hold up as well."

Another cool thing about vintage wooden furniture? The character. As these vintage pieces often tend to feature marks, imperfect edges, or scuffs, Lang finds that this adds just a bit of authenticity and differentiation, especially when compared to a factory-manufactured item. Not to mention, we think every room needs a high-quality piece of brown furniture.

## Light Fixtures

A good, old-fashioned light fixture is an incredible find, often bringing a sense of patinaed charm to a space. And you can also be sure that you're getting something nobody else has! "I highly recommend looking at vintage and consignment stores for unique lighting," says Swabb. "Adding brass, vintage, wall-mounted lighting showcases a decorative patina, for instance, while table and floor lamps might showcase a timeless structure that is not readily available from a mass-produced vendor."

Swabb also says not to worry if the wires inside are no longer working: They can easily be rewired by a professional electrician. Another thing to be aware of also is the voltage in the lamps, as 100-volt lamps were likely not used back in the day! If you use 100-volt or higher lightbulbs, they can short—or even start to burn.

## Dining Chairs

“I absolutely love funky, upholstered dining chairs!” says Trembley. “People often shy away from buying this type of furniture vintage, but they tend to be made so much better than modern items. Vintage upholstery has generally been hand-done, which gives it good bones that are much harder to find with mass produced-upholstery.”

You can also recover these kinds of pieces if you need to, which can help give them new life, adds Trembley. Buying mismatched chairs can also be fun if you’re going for that vibe, but if not, simply making sure that they all lie in the same color scheme can put together the look with ease.

## Glassware

“While buying new glassware is great, I always find that mixing and matching vintage glassware adds a fun, whimsical look to a space that you can’t find anywhere else,” says interior designer Annie Elliott of [Annie Elliott Design](#). “Pro tip: If your drinking glasses are cloudy from age, try soaking them in white vinegar. This has made my old glasses sparkle!”

Elliott also adds that by mixing and matching, you could potentially curate unique sets that are just as beautiful as newer ones: The key is to take one cohesive element, like maybe a particular ridged look or size, and then design around it.

## Leather Armchairs

Good leather can last for years, and it only gets better over time. “I love worn-in leather, especially since it gets so much softer with age,” says Trembley. For that mushy, lived-in look, search for leather armchairs or sofas that use original or vintage leather, as it’ll add to the cozy effect. Not only will you get way more bang for your buck (newer leather sofas can be super pricey!), but you can also find a style that works for your home.