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How Can Armchairs Enhance The Visual Style of a Living Room?

Sam Shemin · Tuesday, March 31st, 2026

Living rooms are probably the hardest room in the house to decorate or design, and the clue to why is in the name. Because how do you incorporate everything important to the way you *live* in just one single room? Elevating the visual style of your most lived-in space can be a daunting prospect, but the good news is I've got a simple hack to solve all your problems: **add some armchairs**.

Yep, it's really that easy. Just take a look at **House & Garden's gallery of 101 living room design ideas** and you'll soon discover that almost every single one of the most beautiful and inviting living spaces share a common feature: the humble armchair.

First designed over 4,000 years ago by the Ancient Egyptians, though probably much older, armchairs have been the go-to seat of everyone, from royalty to working families, for most of human history.

In this quick and easy guide to transforming the aesthetic impact of your living room, I put my 30+ years of design and furniture experience to good use: showing you how effective armchairs can be at enhancing your living room's design.

7 ways in which armchairs can elevate a living room's interior design

Here's a nice way to think about the impact an armchair can have on your living room's visual style: think of them like an accent on a word. Take the word *rose*; slap an accent on the 'e' and you get *rosé*, a word that looks the same but takes on a completely new meaning.

Accent armchairs for living room interiors work the same way. They take the look and feel of your living room and elevate its style, its impact, its *meaning*, in one fell swoop.

Let's take a tour through the 7 key ways you can enhance the visual style of your living room with the simple addition of an armchair or two.

1) Create a reading nook with a cosy armchair

One of my favourite ways to immediately elevate not only the visual style of a living room, but also its functionality, is to create a reading corner with a well-placed armchair. There's honestly nothing quite like posting up in a plush and comfy wingback, a floor lamp to light the corner, and

bookshelves by your side from which to lose yourself in stories.

Most of the recommendations to come allow for armchairs to fulfil multiple functions in the living room, but this first suggestion is a little more specialised. Here, I'm suggesting you craft a corner of your living room for the particular purpose of reading and relaxing.

Of course, you could also use an armchair to create a nook more to your tastes! If you're not a big reader, then perhaps you could create a listening corner—with an armchair sat by your record player and vinyl collection for some deep, meditative late-night music sessions. Or maybe you're a fanatic knitter or crocheter, whose armchair nook could be dedicated to the clothing craft.

The possibilities are endless, but the point is this: by combining a comfy armchair with some beloved hobby accessories—from books and boardgames to birdwatching binoculars—the addition of an armchair to your living room can give the space a whole new *raison d'être*.

2) Draw the eye with a well-placed statement chair

Just as there are ways an armchair can alter the functionality of a living room, so too are there ways it can be a purely aesthetic improvement.

Statement chairs are exactly what they sound like: armchairs with a unique design, shape, pattern or colour, which immediately draw one's attention. These are armchairs that *make a statement*, namely: here is the encapsulation of my unique style and taste.

A good armchair can be considered a 'statement' chair for lots of reasons:

- It contrasts the colour and style of the rest of the room
- It is positioned prominently to deliberately draw the eye of your guests
- It is made from luxurious materials or features exotic designs
- Its placement establishes a new symmetry, which utilises design concepts like 'The Rule of Three' (for example, an accent armchair placed between two windows)

Though a statement chair can (and of course *should*) still be sat on, their primary purpose is to elevate the aesthetic of your interior.

3) Reimagine smaller spaces

Sometimes a living room's architecture will leave one or two awkward spaces (such as squat corners under staircases, or raised platforms and nooks). Knowing how to design and decorate such spaces can be challenging without them quickly becoming cluttered.

An armchair, however, is often exactly what a small space needs. Armchairs are all about comfort, as we've mentioned—the very notion of adding armrests to the classic chair design intended to improve the sitting experience. It's *also* in our nature, however, to enjoy enclosed spaces (think back to caveman times when the natural protection of a cave offered early humans warmth and safety from predators and climate).

Thus, combining an armchair with a smaller space not only makes good use of the otherwise difficult-to-decorate space, but also doubles down on its cosiness.

4) Be bold with armchair colour and pattern

When it comes to enhancing the ‘visual style’ of a living room, I can think of few better ways than to experiment with the colours and/or patterns of an armchair.

Because armchairs take up little space—relative to coffee tables and sprawling sofas—they allow you to be a bit more risqué with your style choices. They allow you, as I hinted at before, to add an *accent* to your living room: to add a splash of colour or pattern without that addition dominating the space.

For example, in a room of soft, sandy neutrals and natural wood tones, why not try an armchair upholstered in rich red, orange or gold. These colours would be both complementary and bold, helping to enhance the visual impact of your space without it feeling too ‘busy.’

5) Complement existing colour schemes with your armchair choice

To continue the thread of armchair colour, let’s have a look at how the armchairs you choose for your living room can elevate what’s already there.

I tend to recommend that instead of looking for an armchair exactly matching the colour or style of your existing suite, you instead search for one that sits adjacent.

For example, if your settee is navy blue on an eggshell grey carpet, it’s best not to choose an armchair in either navy or eggshell. Doing so will match your existing living room style, sure, but it won’t help elevate it. Instead, look for an armchair in an adjacent colour, like a light blue or even a midnight blue.

Going one or two shades lighter or darker with your living room armchairs will create a stunning contrast, which highlights the beauty of the different aspects of the room.

The same goes for style! A mid-century armchair combined with a modern sofa suite creates much more visual interest than both pieces being of the same design.

6) Turn an armchair into a sun-drenched window seat

Natural light is a really important player in a home’s interior design. It can completely change how colours are perceived, not to mention how it affects the atmosphere of any given room. But how do you get the most out of your living room’s natural light? By this point I’m sure you know the answer: put an armchair by the window!

Not only will adding armchairs to prominent patches of daylight provide plentiful opportunities for indoor sunbathing, but the addition of a statement piece of furniture in that spot also helps the eye to really soak up the sun.

As light plays across your gorgeous new armchair throughout the day (and as light changes throughout the year), you and your guests will get to really experience its brilliance.

7) Choose harmonious personal space over the communal sofa

One last piece of advice from me on how to enhance the visual style of your living room with armchairs, and this is one of my favourites. Instead of a sofa as the central seating setup of your

living room, why not try two or more armchairs instead?

Though sofas are beloved by many, there are plenty of folks out there who prefer their own personal space. Individual armchairs are the *perfect* way to meet that desire for personal space *without* compromising on comfort. Moreover, the immediate aesthetic impact of two armchairs (his/hers and his/hers) in place of a sofa is undeniably striking; giving your living room interior a uniquely original feel.

Combine those individual armchairs with footstools, and you could argue you've just added more comfort and style to your living room than a simple sofa ever could!

Conclusion: Choosing the right armchair(s) for your living room space

How you decorate and furnish your living room should always, at the end of the day, be left up to you. Only you *really* know your own taste in style, colour and material inside out. But if there's one piece of advice I can impart before I go, it's this: if in doubt, add an armchair!

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