

Style

Keep the 'slob' from overrunning your house

Tired of trying to keep your house “magazine perfect”? Debbie Wiener of Designing Solutions in Silver Spring, Md., understands all too well. She talked with USA TODAY’s Craig Wilson about her guidelines, “Slob-Proof Your Home for Spring.” (Find out more at MyDesigningSolutions.com.)

Q: Did the fact that you married a slob spur this easy decorating style?

A: He is the man behind my success. Before him, I was just another interior designer. There was a lot of chintz, flowing curtains, elegant traditional homes. And then he went about ruining them. We have two boys, and he encourages them to participate in the demolition. I couldn’t see myself yelling and screaming anymore. I gave in.

Q: You do seem like the perfect mother for a 14-year-old when you say things like “Don’t be a house Nazi.” Do you have no rules?

A: I’d rather read a book than walk around yelling about what needs to be cleaned up. I caution clients not to design a home for the outside world. It’s better to spend money on things meant for your own family. It can still look good.

Q: You advise never to walk into a boy’s bathroom barefoot. You even advocate the installation of a urinal.

A: So many new homes have bidets. Has anyone used one other than for washing out pantyhose? Why not consider a urinal? It may save some marriages. The fact that you don’t have to yell at your spouse about the floor might make life more bearable.

Q: How do you go about finding high-quality, fuss-free styles that don’t require special care?

A: There are some things you just have to rule out. If you’ve got kids or a black Lab, white upholstery is no longer an option. Beige carpeting is an endangered species, too. Medium tones are better. Skirts vs. no skirts on chairs and sofas? I go for no skirt. If you’ve got pets rubbing up against it, you get hair. Kids kick it. It’s just a common-sense approach.

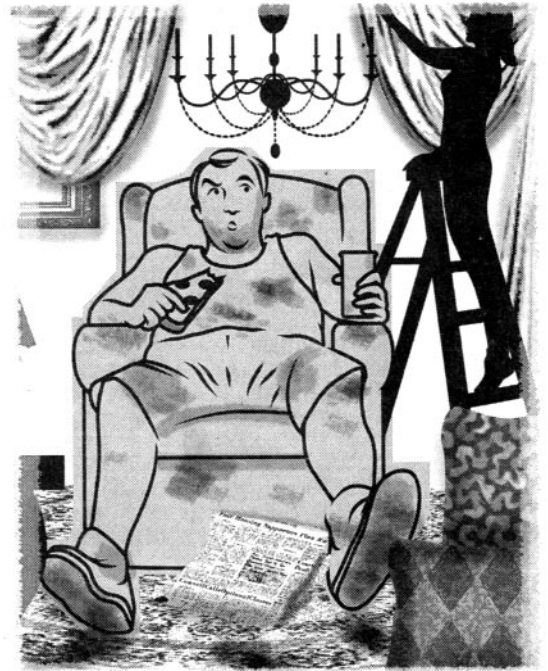
And I strongly advise, if you think your family belongs in an institution, get institutional fabrics. Get Crypton fabrics. You can sit down with wet bathing suits, and the chlorine won’t hurt the fabric. And use color! It’s better at camouflaging everyday life.

Q: You’re a big advocate of lighting. I would think you’d want to keep the lights down if you’re living among slob.

A: There’s no substitute for good lighting. Color comes to life when it’s well lit. I’m an advocate for great lighting that’s focused on wall art and display cabinets. All the things that are important to you.

Q: And what’s this with getting rid of table lamps?

A: Put most of your lighting out of reach and danger. I’d limit a floor lamp to just by a reading chair. Fill your room with recessed lighting.



Q: You say to put money into things you sit and stand on. Give some examples.

A: Sofas and rugs. It seems pointless to me to blow all your money on a coffee table and then have a lousy sofa that needs to be replaced every two or three years. I always put as much as the client can afford into what will last the longest.

Q: You follow what you call WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) guidelines. What are they?

A: Be prepared for whatever life throws at or on your furniture. A spitting-up baby, a sick cat, my husband. If you anticipate the worst-case scenario, like in wrestling, you’re going to make better decisions. A sisal rug, for instance; if you spill or vomit on it, it’s going to get ruined. It’s very simple: Just don’t do it.