

What your space says about you...

...MAY BE MORE REVEALING THAN YOU KNOW: YOU'RE ALL OVER YOUR PLACE.

ALONNA FRIEDMAN LOOKS AT THE CORNERS OF OUR ROOMS AND MINDS

We know the eyes are the windows to the soul. Well, now it seems the actual windows (and window treatments) are what expose your essence, according to a recent study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. "There is a direct link between how we set up our home and certain personality traits, such as being open to new experiences or being dependable," says study author Samuel Gosling, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at The University of Texas at Austin. But don't start rearranging your furniture just yet...

Check the box of the picture that best reflects your nest.
Then turn the page for your domestic diagnosis



Compulsive Home

Are you a perfectionist—and proud of it? Do you arrange, alphabetize and align all the stuff in your space until you're absolutely satisfied?



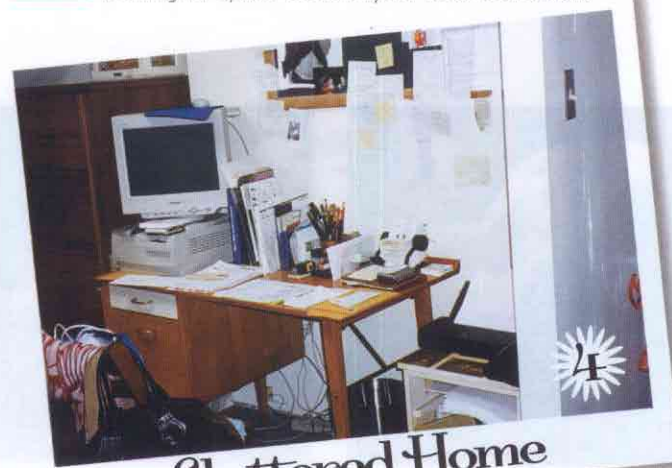
Creative Home

Do you covet color and collect items, like botanical prints or bell-bottom jeans? Are you always looking for space to stash your book collection?



Conservative Home

Do you feel that there's such a thing as too much personality? Do you avoid accumulating books, magazines and CDs?



Cluttered Home

Are you carefree about where you put your personal stuff? Do postcards and other travel-related items dot your walls?

1



Compulsive Home

Domestic diagnosis:

According to Dr. Gosling, the occupant of this organized room is "highly conscientious, neat and has a good sense of space." And stylish, too—design may be your deity. If you checked this space,

you're not about to indulge in quirky, unattractive collections, and you tend to buy books as much for the color of the binding as the quality of the reading. Your sorting skills are superhuman: You arrange, align and alphabetize even your pencils. And design freaks aren't flakes about time: Gosling says you often have clocks in every room.

Self- and space-improving strategies: Deborah Wiener, who specializes in real-life interior design at Designing Solutions, her Washington, D.C.-area firm, loved the clutter-free cleanliness of this room, but the super-symmetry gave her pause. "Take a look at your body in the mirror—things which occur naturally are asymmetrical," she says. How to break out of the balance habit? Soften space with curtains, pillows and area rugs that aren't necessarily identical to each other (gasp!). Flowers and plants warm things up, too. Place them all in the same white stoneware pots, if you must, but vary your vegetation. (This applies to your every-day-the-same diet, too.)

2



Creative Home

Domestic diagnosis:

Whoever lives in this bright, bold room (endless bookcases not shown) enjoys an open-to-the-world outlook, says Gosling. "People who have lots of art, and books on topics from poetry to

politics, score high on the openness scale," he says. Consider yourself creative if you go through various phases and it shows in your space, like in your stacks of newsweeklies (which you swore you'd read), your collections of, say, vintage handbags or your shelf of books devoted to old Hollywood comedies.

Self- and space-improving strategies: Remember, you rule your household, not your early '80s Madonna memorabilia. "If a coffee table is covered with collectibles, how can you possibly use it?" asks Wiener. Also know that too many big personality pieces can overpower a place. You may love your batik ottoman and red-satin chair equally, but keep them separate. "Have fun but remember there needs to be comfort and function behind design," says Wiener. "Don't forget that furniture is to provide places to sit, relax and have conversations." For this place, adding cushions on the metal settee and day bed would provide better back support. All the better to admire your ever-changing displays.

3



Conservative Home

Domestic diagnosis:

This place has purity in taste, but lacks personal expression. Near-empty walls and the not-there book and music collections indicate a more conservative personality, says Gosling. If you checked this home, it means you're not an emotional

exhibitionist in either your life or your home. The basic and the functional are just fine for you, thank you very much. If this place resembles yours, it doesn't mean you're a cold fish—you're just comfortable living in your space and not preoccupied with putting a personal stamp on it.

Self- and space-improving strategies: The smoothest and speediest road to visual vroom? Color, says Wiener. "Start small—even if you paint only one wall a color, it will differentiate the space from the rest of the house." Too drastic? Put color on details like moldings and door pilasters. Still risky? Adding attitude can be as easy as accessorizing, from putting cushions on chairs, to placing vases on the table, or throwing down a rug. This strategy of taking baby steps toward more personal expression can work for your personal look, too: How about a little lilac shirt to go with your basic brown suit?

4



Cluttered Home

Domestic diagnosis:

Forgive yourself: Clutter doesn't mean you're a slob, it just means your head isn't in your space. People who aren't that conscious of their surroundings might display personal items randomly, like

"family photos stuck haphazardly to a bulletin board," says Gosling. You tend to scatter evidence of your everywhere-but-here mentality around the house: souvenirs, maps and other travel-related items. You clutterbugs don't stress about space-saving or privacy; you may leave a checkbook out in the open because stowing it didn't occur to you. So if your foyer table is buried in bills (or swirling in dust bunnies), it only means you have more exciting things to think about.

Self- and space-improving strategies: Clutter cures abound (see page 131 for 10 of them). For this room, Wiener suggests whipping the wall into a mega-bulletin board so remember-me items can be spaced out for better readability. Then take laminated wood and turn the desktop into a larger "L" shape. And a good desk chair is always a great investment, even if it ends up buried in freelance flotsam. Says Wiener: "The increased comfort will allow you to focus and work at your desk for longer periods," so you can grow the green for getaways. 🌱