

## **HOME Interiors**

# **Space Program**

*By Denise Whitley* – March, 2006

It's just a bonus room, but it can feel like rocket science.

Your first reaction: "Wow, look at all that extra space!"

Your second: "What am I going to do with all that extra space?"

Bonus rooms have many possibilities. They can be almost anything - gym, home office, playroom, a place to hide your husband's giant screen TV, and sometimes, all of the above.

So how do you maximize the space?

The Interior Design Society, Triangle East Chapter, offers some solutions.

You can't do anything until you prioritize your needs.

The kids may want to play in the room while you're busy doing paper work, or you may want to run on the treadmill while your husband watches a movie.

You can section off parts of the room to create spaces appropriate for any task.

Before you start ordering furniture, measure and draw a floor plan of graph paper. That way, you can make sure there's enough room for the areas you want to create.

A good rule of thumb is to think of every square on the graph paper as one foot.

You can even make cutouts of furniture and move them around your model floor plan to map the best placement.

It's important to create a focus for the room. For instance, a big screen TV, which would take up a lot of space, is an obvious choice for a focal point.

Bonus rooms tend to have several roof-line angles, making accommodating standard-sized furniture a challenge.

Custom cabinetry often is a good solution. You can set up drawers and cabinets based on your actual needs, and get them in any wood finish you like.

You can customize a wall unit for your specific TV and components as well as display family pictures at the same time.

In front of your focus area, you could place a sofa, chairs, ottoman, and tables, or a sectional for more seating.

If you purchase a sleeper sofa, the bonus room can also serve as a bedroom when you have guests.

To make the room even more guest-friendly, choose an ottoman with casters that doubles as a coffee table and can be moved easily to unfold the sleeper sofa.

When furnishing a casual bonus room, choose durable, washable, fabrics in natural colors, unless more bold hues are more your style.

Use pillows, art and accessories to add pops of color.

For lighting, consider recessed, canned lights placed throughout designated areas. Add lamps on end tables and desks for task lighting.

Window shades or blinds will block glare on the TV and protect the furniture and flooring.

A children's play area, which is likely to be scattered with toys, should be located as far as possible from the door.

When not in use, toys can be stored in baskets or containers on the shelves of your custom-made unit.

For your office space, an adjustable-height desk can accommodate all family members, whether your paying bills, the kids are researching a school project or your husband is working on his novel.

Today's average home size is 2,200 square feet, up from 1,400 square feet in the 1970s. - National Association of Home Builders