

Start by rethinking your color palette. Indulge in jewel-tones, but shades that appear to have the patina of age: soft blues and greens, warm yellows and reds. Let cream or black be your constant to tie together disparate patterns. Instead of overly matched textiles, choose a variety of checks, stripes and vintage florals that complement, but aren't necessarily coordinated. A bit of black in the fabrics, along with black picture frames or painted furniture will be enough to unify the room. Metallic accents liven the scheme.

Other great choices for francophiles include textured linen and weathered leather, all canvas toiles, tapestries for both upholstery and hanging and, for the luxe look, silks, brocades, and velvets. Pay attention to dressmaker details: pin tucks, delicate embroidery, covered buttons, and unique ribbons or cording. If you can't decide between dozens of fabulous fabrics, pamper yourself with a plethora of pillows, one from each. An abundance of oversized pillows, along with plump sofas and comfy reading chairs, makes for a very cozy atelier.

Adding architectural elements will lend a sense of greatness to a small space. For an artist's loft, emphasize exposed ceiling beams and treat the walls with rough plaster. For an elegant pied-à-terre, add decorative molding and cornice boards. Even white plaster garden statuary looks at home indoors.

Furniture can range from genuine antique to thrift shop. An armoire is always a good investment, especially if you have limited closet space. If carved dark woods are a little out of your range, mask serviceable furniture with a few coats of cream or ebony paint, then use a gilding kit to accent. For vintage

style, try distressing pieces with stains and fine grain sandpaper. If you're talented (or simply bold), try painting a trompe l'oeil scene. You can also faux-finish furniture for a marbled effect. When faced with a truly uninspired end table, just *decouper* French newspaper or magazine pages to the top, and seal with a little clear varnish. Round out your furnishings with an inexpensive wrought-iron bistro table and chairs. This creates a contemplative spot for morning coffee and croissants.

No apartment is complete without art. Gigantic reproduction posters advertising Perrier, champagne, or chocolat are readily

available. Artwork of French landmarks, sepia prints, and black-and-white photography help bring the theme together. Also seek train station clocks, large vintage mirrors, and commercial signs *en francais* at tag sales. In the kitchen, accessorize with bistro ware and heavy bakeware, wine racks, jacquard towels and table linens. In the bedroom, choose quilted linens, fleur-de-lis accents, a luxurious vanity for primping and hatboxes for extra storage. In the living area, add European elegance with topiaries, plenty of beeswax candles, candelabra, and art glass vases. In the bath, treat yourself to milled soaps, fresh flowers, and decorative scarves as window dressing.

French style means choosing items for your home because they are impeccable. Perfect for your intention, and even if used, fairly flawless in quality. Take time to shop. Purchase whatever speaks to your personality. Don't give in too much to trends, or practicality either. Just be sure to add a bit of *joie de vivre*.



Incorporate rustic and romantic elements



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