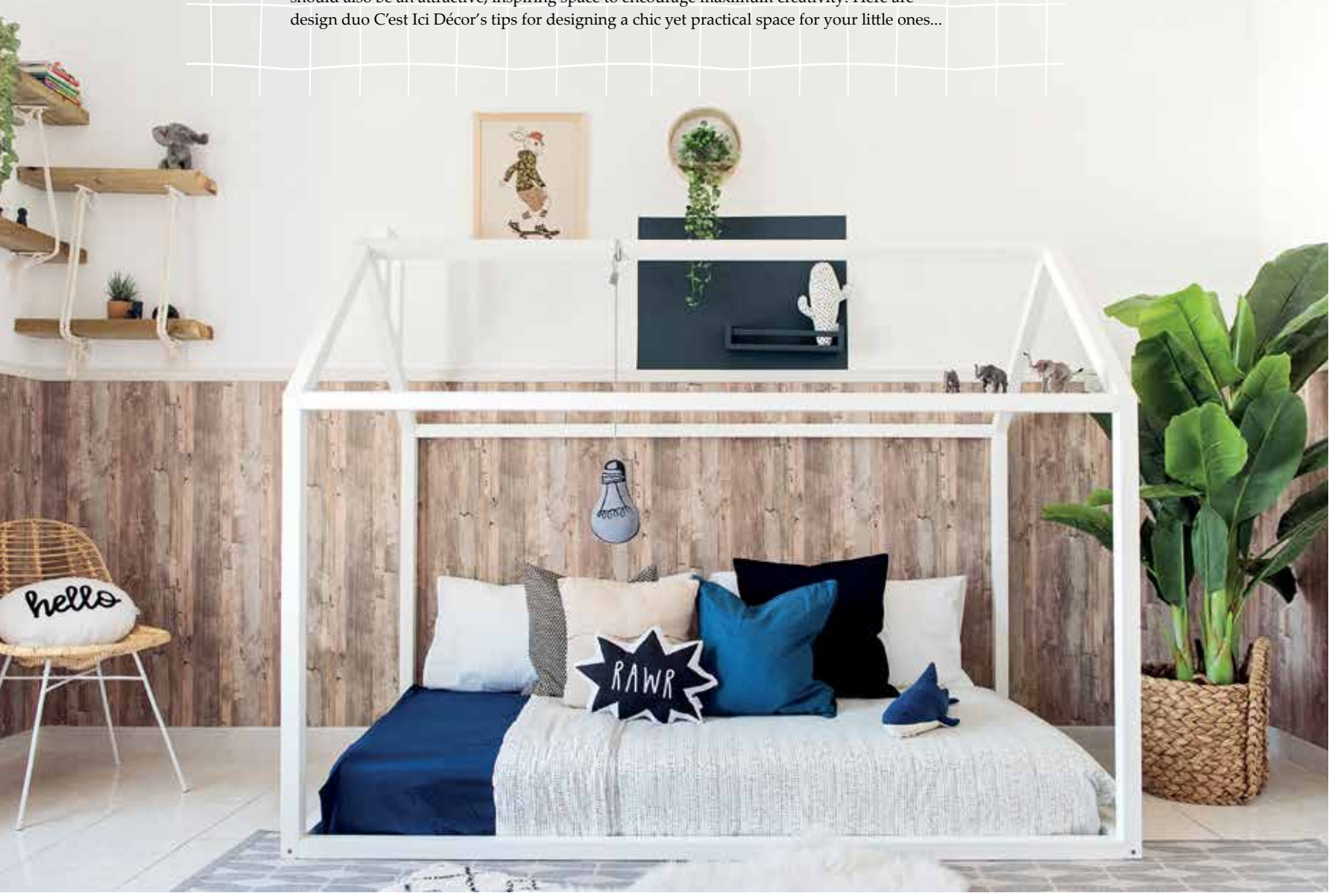


IT'S PLAY TIME!

Tips on taming the toy mess and designing a practical yet pretty playroom for your little learners

Whether you have a dedicated playroom, use a corner of your child's nursery, or integrate a play space into another room in your home, there's no getting away from the fact that – if you have kids in the house – there's going to be toy carnage somewhere.

But while it may be the messiest area of your living space, it's also one of the most important. Think of it as your child's office – it's where they do their most intensive learning, creative thinking and stretch their imaginations. So, like any office, it needs some kind of organisational structure to keep it functional and practical for regular use. And, ideally, it should also be an attractive, inspiring space to encourage maximum creativity. Here are design duo C'est Ici Décor's tips for designing a chic yet practical space for your little ones...



Assess the Space

Whether you live in a massive villa or a cosy apartment, one of the most common mistakes is the tendency to clutter a play area with toys, book storage and furniture. Remember: part of the functionality of the play area is to have enough free space to play. Take a pen and paper and plan your layout, prioritising your kids' needs and labelling the play stations, but most of all making sure that you have more space than furniture!

This neutral-palette play area from is a good example of working with the space. We created a corner for arts and crafts, a little reading library, storage, seating area and kitchen section. The soft palette also makes it feel clean and tidy. Plus, lots of space for the little ones to play!



Sort Your Storage

This is where most of us struggle, as there always seem to be too many toys! The less is more approach is best. First tip: declutter as much as possible and give away what's not being put to good use any more. Sit down with your little ones and separate the keepers and choose the leavers together.

Boxing clever:



SIT AND STOW
Storage bench,
Dh300, Ikea



PRACTICALLY PRETTY
Donni's storage shelf,
Dh299, Home Centre



THE BIG ONE
Nobodnoz dresser Pure,
Dh5,660,
Just Kidding



TINY TIDIER
Mini Collection toy storage
box with wheels, Dh575,
The Bowery Company



BASKET CASE
Sea grass belly basket,
Dh65, White Moss

Pick a Feature Wall

Creating a feature wall is one of the easiest and least expensive game-changers for a playroom, especially if it's being integrated into a larger room in the house, as it makes it very clear where the fun starts!

This play area from one of our projects in Jumeirah is a perfect example of a fun but stylish feature wall. Our brief was to

design a playful yet sophisticated look, and so we chose this simple mountain mural design in a range of gorgeously muted shades. We're loving the neutrals Identity paint collection from Jotun at the moment, but find a paint palette you like and don't be afraid to mix the hues together. We picked four complementary colours and voilà! For a DIY mountain mural video how-to see Babyandchild.ae



decor

TOP TIP
The colour palette generally depends on two things: a) the space in your house and b) the light. The darker the room, the lighter you should go, and vice-versa.



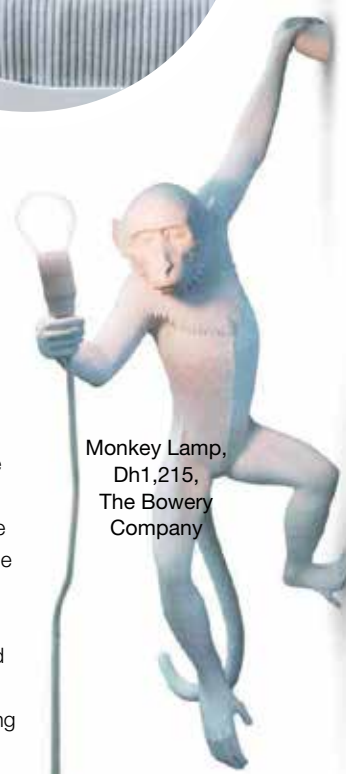
Harpers House
Bunk Bed
90X200 Cms
Dh2,999
Home Center

House Hunt

Kids love to play house, and there are now a whole range of easily available possibilities when it comes to stylish play house options. Don't be afraid to experiment with how you use them – house-shaped bed frames from the likes of JoBa look great and are a fab way to make the transition from cot to bed fun and less intimidating for little ones, while you can also rest easy as the frame sits safely on the floor. Meanwhile we repurposed this Home Centre house bed, which is intended to be a sleeping space, into a calm and cosy reading nook. We opted for a standard white base accented by midnight blue accessories.

Shop Smart

There are so many gorgeous interiors options for kids these days it would be easy to blow the budget on just a few things, but we recommend buying mindfully for the most part, mixing and matching between cute little finds and affordable furnishings. Rugs, cushions and blankets need to be durable and comfy. If you want to splash out on something unique, invest in art pieces and wall art – the kind of things kids can't reach to destroy!



Monkey Lamp,
Dh1,215,
The Bowery Company

Blend Wisely

Not everyone has the square footage for a dedicated playroom, so when it comes to integrating a play area into another space in the house, our tip is to be consistent in your colour palettes and create multifunctional storage spaces. We designed this play area within an open-plan space in a house, opting for a complementary colour palette of neutrals, creams and blues, along with natural materials and fabrics, so that it blends seamlessly with the design of the living room.



Divide and Conquer

There's no better way to organise the various games, tasks and activities your children will be doing than with dedicated play stations. This enables them to easily pick which activities they want to do. Having all their respective supplies at the stations also makes it easier to get started (and to tidy up!). See right for some inspiration on how to divide them up...



THE ARTY AREA
An area dedicated to crayons, markers, different types of paper, colouring books, tape, scissors and other crafting supplies. Make sure to include a means to display their work, such as a corkboard or a magnet board.

THE TOY BOX
Whether your kids are into action figures, dolls, cars, or other general toys, they need a place too! Having a bin where your child can keep their favourite toys is just as important as all of the educational play spaces. Children need to play and have fun!

Your Play Station Action Plan



THE SCIENCE BIT
Fill this space with things like science experiments, educational software and anything that encourages measuring, weighing, mixing



THE LEARNING LAYOUT
Set up a table with pencils and pens, ruled paper, and potentially a device to help them learn to type. Add educational posters with the alphabet or playful words, alongside flash cards and books for examples of good writing.



THE BRICK BRIGADE
If your child has a real affinity for Lego, perhaps designating a specific space to build it would be best. Consider the required storage that comes along with Lego. Building in some storage bins will go a long way.

Tame the Books

One of the main problems we find in most houses is book clutter (including ours!). More specifically: kids' books. Yes yes, it's crucial to build up a reading habit, but the fact is we are all overloaded with them. So, our tip is to declutter a few of them first as much as possible, and then make categories from the most popular ones to the least. The popular ones get prime position, either in a separate, smaller floating book shelf, or on the lower shelves of a larger bookshelf with easy access – while the less loved ones go up, up, up.

Vamp up a book storage area with a statement wall – we like using fun wall decals, neon signs or wallpaper, like this horizontal-striped example from Paper Pop Dubai. 🐦



PHOTOS BY NATELEE COCKS



About C'est Ici Décor
Monica and Tatiana, based in Dubai, are the co-founders of C'est Ici Décor, an interior design and styling company that aims to help clients create their dream house, room by room. They offer a range of different packages to suit a variety of budgets, from an E-moodboard bundle that encompasses a meet and greet, style quiz and moodboard with product references, to a concierge buying service, space-planning and furniture fixing and fitting bundle. See Cesticidecor.com.