



home. techorating

Skinny, flat-panel TVs are changing the way we remodel, design, and decorate our living spaces. The techno-savvy are often quick to turn this sleek appliance into a room's focal point. But if a shiny black rectangle above the mantel isn't your idea of art, read on for expert tips and clever ideas to hide, disguise, and integrate a flat-panel TV in your home. >>

Idea File

FLAT-PANEL PLANNING

Interior designer Lorrie Browne offers this advice to optimize flat-panel function.

1. Location, location, locàtion. Before you choose a TV size and location, consider the following: Do you want to see the TV from multiple rooms? Where is the cable hookup and electrical outlet? Where does light enter the room, and how will that affect image quality?

2. Let space drive size. Sorry, guys—bigger isn't always better. Decide where you'll house the TV, and use this simple formula for premium viewing: "Measure the viewing distance and divide it in half," Browne says. "If it's 7 feet, you're looking at a 40-inch TV."

3. Opt for eye level. Mounting a flat panel above the mantel may seem sensible, but sometimes it's a pain in the neck. For the right vantage point, the middle of the TV should be at eye level. But if you prefer a high mount, install mounting brackets with tilting capabilities.

4. Keep it functional. There are lots of ways to hide your flat panel if you so choose. Just consider how these options will affect the space's design and function. Certain options may look logical when they're closed, but what about when the TV is in use? Focus on integration, not just hiding the unit.

5. Think of heat. Flat panels don't let off as much heat and electromagnetic energy as the old tube TVs, but it's important to give them some air. Keep the component 2–3 inches off the wall, and make sure your integration method allows for adequate ventilation, especially if you have a plasma TV, which tends to get hotter.



“Kitchens and baths have always been the biggest bang for your remodeling buck, but I believe integration of technology into the home will be something people put a greater value on.”

— Lorrie Browne, interior designer

WORKING IT IN

Your space and budget will determine how you house your flat panel. Here are some options.

Ceiling Mount. When space is at a premium, maximize flat-panel use with a ceiling mount that tilts and swivels. This TV, *above*, mounted between the living space and bedroom, defines and divides the areas and easily rotates to serve both. Mounts and More offers a similar product, the Peerless PLCM custom kit (\$229), which fits 32- to 71-inch flat panels. It swivels 360 degrees and has a 20-degree adjustable tilt. Heavy-gauge cold-rolled steel construction ensures durability, and the extension column lets you set the TV at a height that's easy on your neck. Mounts and More; 866/506-6868; mountsandmore.com

Ceiling Lift. "This is a great option if you have the budget," Browne says. "It integrates the TV into your environment only when it's needed." A ceiling flip-down lift from Auton Motorized Systems (price available upon request) requires 11½ inches of space above the ceiling. Just one click with the remote control safely and quietly lowers and raises your flat panel. Auton Motorized Systems, 661/257-9282; auton.com

Double Function. The entertainment centers that housed old tube TVs provided excellent storage for books and family photos, but the bulky units don't always work with larger flat-panel TVs. Add display space and give your new TV a home with the Gyre from Reversica (starting at \$3,000). What appears to be a standard bookcase transforms into an entertainment center with a simple 180-degree twist that reveals space for a 42- to 65-inch flat panel. Reversica; 888/887-6887; reversica.com

Artistic Disguise. Turn your flat-panel TV into a framed masterpiece with a cover from VisionArt Galleries. When the TV is off, all you see is the framed artwork of your choice. When the TV is turned on, a motor quietly rolls the print out of sight, revealing your recessed flat panel. Choose from 300 canvas prints or use a photograph of your own. Custom-crafted frames complement your space. VisionArt Galleries; 866/432-4353; solarshadingsystems.com

Build In. If mantel mounting is a must, consider building the monitor into the wall, *below*. The TV may be modern, but it's important to "choose an integration method that complements your home's existing decor, not the TV," Browne says. She also recommends giving extra thought to where components will be housed. The TV and other components need airflow and protection from potentially damaging heat that radiates from the fireplace when it's in use. Speakers for



this system are built into the mantel as well, providing high-quality sound without disturbing or cluttering the room's traditional decor.

Sliding Doors. Embrace minimal design by discretely hiding high-tech gadgets behind floor-to-ceiling sliding doors, *above*. They cover the flat panel when it's not in use and blend in with the built-in closet, creating a clean and seamless look.

Magic Mirror. Hide your flat-panel TV behind a traditional-looking framed mirror with Media Decor's Media-Mirror (price available upon request). Utilizing the two-way mirror concept, a coating transmits the TV image five times better than a standard two-way mirror for maximum brightness. This integration method works best in rooms that are dark or have heavy window treatments, as "reflection can become an issue if there's a lot of light in the room," Browne says. Media Decor; 954/524-1104; mediadecor.com

