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Dorms: Past, Present, and Future

After a typical student's 9-month residency, a dorm room might be one of those "if these walls could talk" cases. But why wait that long? We asked some top designers to share their ideas about how to give a dorm room its own unique feel - whether the goal is to invoke hip retro styles, inspire visions for the future, or simply make something that looks very *now*.



Display family photographs from the 1960s in simple black frames and, ingeniously, parents look cool.

Christina Sullivan and Susan Bednar Long, cofounders of the interior design firm [Tocar](#) in New York, say that the Mod look from the '60s - when materials such as acrylic, lacquer, steel, and fiberglass were big - easily translates to a current dorm room. "The '60s is the Era of the Modern Classics," says Sullivan. "[Tall lamps](#), large lampshades, colorful art, Lucite pieces, and metal accessories will give it a sophisticated feel from the era," says Sullivan. "You can create a very '60s seating area with just a shag rug and multipurpose furniture like stackable chairs or side tables that can serve as TV stands or stools." Colorwise, keep it simple. "Always stick to a three-color rule," she says. Sullivan and Long also suggest selecting family photographs from the 1960s and displaying them in simple black picture frames - ingeniously, parents suddenly look cool.

College circa 2056

For a futuristic look, [Chapman Radcliff Home](#) boutique owner Ruthie Sommers suggests a black-and-white scheme - a circular black rug and [black lamps](#) to offset white sheets and white mirrors. For a sleek, future look, "there should be less paper and clutter," notes the Los Angeles-based designer. To solve the clutter problem, she suggests no-frills [storage units](#).

The Dorm du Jour

For a look firmly grounded in 2006, try mixing looks from different eras: antique-repro lights mixed with classic items such as Eero Saarinen's late-'50s [Tulip chairs](#), which look retro and futuristic at the same time. Animal-inspired decorations, such as a [deer-shaped mirror](#) or the removable bird decals available at Urban [Outfitters](#) are also very current, and work well with accents from any era. Of course, a room wouldn't be modern if it didn't have the requisite iPod accoutrements. But the design savvy young person will make sure to color coordinate such items.

Just keep in mind that organization and space planning is key to being mess free. "Hard to achieve in a dorm room?" asks Sullivan. "You might think so, but it's as easy as making your bed."