

HOMELIVING



Need colour? Sofa, so good

Plan carefully when lounging around, writes **Shainagh O'Connor**

SELECTING the perfect sofa for your room, home and family is no easy feat. Three seater or four? Narrow arms or wide? Modular or more traditional? Upholstered to the floor or raised off the ground so you can see right under it?

Then there's the choice of cover and colour. Get it wrong and you can be stuck with a large and expensive piece of furniture you never really love, for a very long time.

Get it right and you can have a comfortable, functional and beautiful addition to your home for years.

Our guide to choosing the perfect sofa is here to make it all just a bit easier.

What to consider?

Melbourne sofa specialist store Sofa & Soul owner Christine Found said choosing between wide or narrow arms was the main focus for most buyers.

"Narrow arms are generally teamed with tall, timber legs for a lighter look and wide arms are teamed with a timber or heavy base for a more solid look," Ms Found said.

If the idea of reconfiguring your sofa or redesigning your room every now and then grabs you, a modular sofa might be the way to go.

Additionally, if you have an odd-shaped room or a corner to fill, a modular design can help fill the space.

Consider whether you are someone who likes to lie on their sofa to relax, read or watch TV. If so, a small two seater with high arms won't be big enough for you to lie on or offer you a comfortable place to rest your head. Go for something that will accommodate you top to toe, with a low arm to act as a headrest.

Ms Found said a family sofa to be used by children called for compromise between beauty and practicality.

"Some people say that leather is the best option for a family sofa, and many love the look of natural leather but they have to be aware that natural leather scuffs and fades," she said.

"It's best to choose a protected leather that has been treated during the tanning process so it is ready for practical use."

What's hot right now?

Two designs stand out as being on trend, Ms Found said.

There is a choice between the solid, wide-armed look with no room between the sofa's kickboard and floor, or narrow arms teamed with slender longer legs that raise the sofa body off the floor.

Sofa legs are now popular in a bronze or gold finish to match the trend for these shades in urns, coffee-table bases and light fittings.

You can't go wrong with any shade of grey as a sofa covering, and blue — from a pale shade to a navy — or blush pink are also on the hot list.

Alternatively, combine your grey sofa with accents like cushions and throws in blue or blush pink for the best of both worlds.

Ms Found said low-back sofas were in and recommended accent chairs if you want a head rest.

Common mistakes:

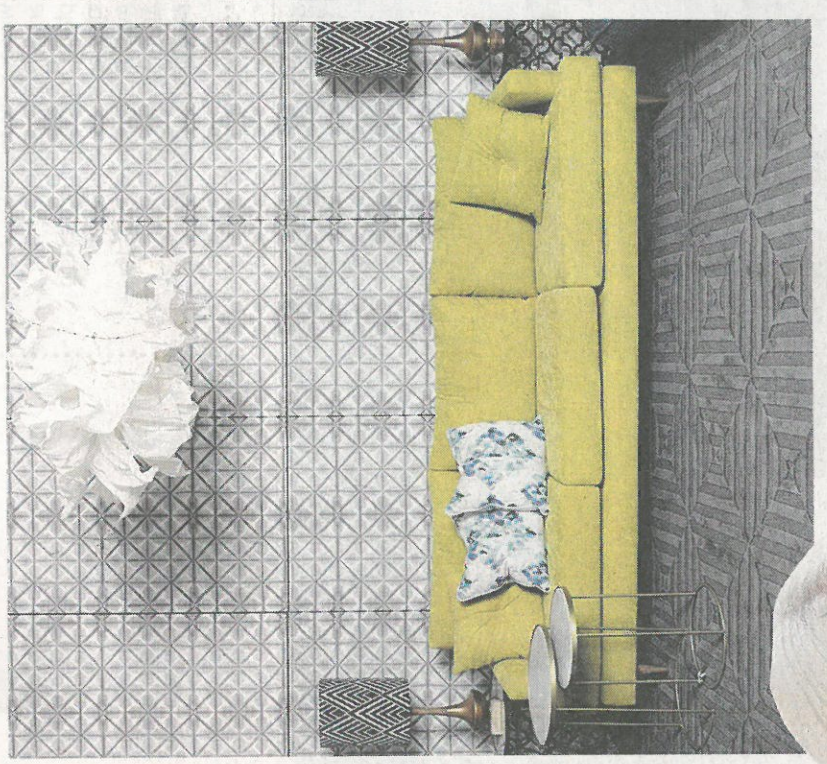
FORGETTING TO MEASURE THE SPACE AVAILABLE FOR YOUR SOFA BEFORE BUYING
Ms Found said manufacturers classed a four-seater sofa as anywhere between 2m and 2.8m, so don't "guesstimate" the size you need as you hand over the credit card.

NEGLECTING TO WORK OUT HOW YOU WILL GET THE SOFA INTO YOUR ROOM ONCE DELIVERED

Measure all access points into the house and then the room/space. This includes doorways, lifts, stairwells and garden gates. "There are people in high-rise apartments who report there are new sofas sitting in hallways because people simply forget to consider access before they purchased," Ms Found said.

THINKING YOUR FAVOURITE SOFA IN THE SHOWROOM WILL LOOK EXACTLY THE SAME WHEN YOU GET IT HOME

Showrooms are spacious and often lack



natural light. Anything on show in the store display area will appear larger and bolder when you get home.

BASING YOUR FABRIC CHOICE ON A SMALL SWATCH

A tiny fabric sample won't show the true detail, colours and textures you will see in a large piece of furniture. Use the largest fabric sample you can find and look at it in your home environment. "If it's a patterned fabric, sometimes you don't see the whole pattern in a small swatch, or what looks like just a fleck could actually be an irregular line through the fabric," Ms Found said. "The same colours will look lighter in a large piece and darker in a small one."

KIDDING YOURSELF THAT KIDS AND LIGHT-COLOUR FABRICS GO TOGETHER

Opt for practicality in sofa fabrics when you have small children — commercial grade fabrics are the way to go.

sofasoul.com.au

The Martin sofa by Molimic (top) has a variety of options, including a chaise, while The Crawford by Mollic is a classic slimline sofa with a '60s edge. Sofa & Soul's owner, Christine Found.