

the innovation issue

Better Homes and Gardens®

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Innovative products to help you connect, cook, decorate, organize, and enjoy

Spring Desserts!

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Strawberry Rhubarb Pie
Easy Bar Cookies

Color! Pretty Eggshell Blues

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elements of style

Designer and blogger Erin Gates shares her signature look—tradition with a twist—and tips to achieve your personal style.

BY PAIGE PORTER FISCHER | PHOTOS MICHAEL PARTENIO
STYLING STACY KUNSTEL

“I like mixing retail with high-end,” Erin says. “It gives a room personality.” In her living room, *this photo*, she married custom pillows with art she painted and a \$100 Home Goods coffee table. A black buffet, *opposite bottom*, houses a bar between the living room and kitchen. “I love when furniture becomes something it wasn’t intended to be,” Erin says. Contemporary bookshelves flank the buffet. “They turn books into decor,” she says.



Erin and husband Andrew, left, walk their dogs, Oliver and Baxter, through their Boston neighborhood. Erin blogs daily at elementsofstyleblog.com and is working on her first design book, due next year.

Find your inspiration

Choose one statement-making item—something with an interesting shape, size, or color—and build a room around it. “Every room in my house began with one item that I couldn’t walk away from,” Erin says. In her living room, that piece was the sofa. “I bought my navy blue velvet sofa and had nothing else for the space,” she says. “But it inspired me to search for all the right pieces to accompany it.” Erin balances traditional Louis-style chairs with a contemporary floor lamp and the sofa’s modern lines.



Play with pattern

Small doses of pattern keep rooms fresh and energetic. Don't be afraid to mix patterns—just work in neutral counterpoints, such as the gray walls in Erin's master bedroom, *right*. White bedding with coral banding also gives the patterns breathing room. The navy-and-white ceramic lamp adds a graphic punch, and the bench at the foot of the bed wears the same print that Erin, a former fashion stylist, often does: leopard. "I had to have a little bit of that in my room," says Erin, who reupholstered the inexpensive catalog piece herself.



"I like plain bedding with one really great, patterned accent pillow up front," Erin says. Both her master bedroom and her guest room, *above*, adhere to that rule. A quiet bed better showcases quirky pieces such as the stone elephant side table.

INNOVATION!

The hot list

As a decorator and blogger, Erin has her eye on design advances:

"I just saw these amazing new **Adorne outlets and light switches**.

USB port in the wall? Yes, please! You can pick the type of switch and customize the wall plate with leather, metal, or wallpaper." From about \$8; legrand.us

"Sherwin-Williams' **ColorSnap Studio app** for the iPad lets you find paint colors from your photos—like the perfect mint green of an ice cream cone." Free; [iTunes.com](http://itunes.com)

"Armstrong's **vinyl plank flooring** is genius for basements or damp spaces. I installed it in a client's basement playroom and wine cellar—it looks just like wood." armstrong.com



The walls work hard in Erin's office. One got the chalkboard paint treatment, left, to help Erin keep track of to-do lists. On the cinder block wall near the desk, Erin and her assistant tape up inspiration photos.

One of Erin's best retail finds is this gray glass-front armoire from IKEA, below. "It is such an appealing piece, with great bones and hardware," she says. "It's so much more attractive than a filing cabinet."

Put more home in your home office

Treat your office as a living space, and it will become a more inspiring place to work, Erin says. Add a rug for softness and find attractive storage. Erin fills modern shelves and woven baskets with binders and hanging files, and she puts fabric samples in linen-covered containers. Above all, avoid office furniture. Choose pieces you'd use in the rest of your home. "Most people buy a too-small desk and end up with no room to work," Erin says. "Think about using a dining room table instead." She did that times two, forming a two-person desk from a sleek lacquered pair. ■

Discover your style

Watch Erin walk through her process for finding someone's style—and see how you can do it, too. BHG.com/TipsFromErin

