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Hearth & Home

Tips & Tricks

for Choosing the Right Fireplace

The fireplace isn't just for heat—it's the home's heartbeat. Whether you're curling up on a cold night or basking in its glow, a fireplace defines comfort and connection. Once limited to living rooms, fireplaces are now making a statement in every corner—from bedrooms to bathrooms, kitchens to patios. But before you spark that first flame, there are a few key things to consider.

First, check if a fireplace is even possible. Before diving into design, secure the necessary permits. Skipping this step can lead to delays, legal headaches, or worse—removal of your new fireplace. When choosing a fireplace, explore all your options, from wood-burning to gas and electric, each with its own pros and cons. Do your research. After all, this is a long-term investment, with many factors

to consider. Now, onto style: Not all fireplaces suit every space. Here's a breakdown of the top three options.

Wood-Burning Fireplaces If you're a fan of that crackling sound and smoky aroma, a wood-burning fireplace might be calling your

name. There's nothing quite like the warm, flickering glow of a real fire. But let's be real: wood-burning fireplaces aren't for everyone. They require significant structural work, including a masonry chimney, which can be costly and might not be feasible for every home. Plus, there's the upkeep—storing firewood, building, and maintaining fires, and cleaning. It's a commitment, but for some, it's worth every bit of effort.

Gas Fireplaces If you want the charm of a traditional fireplace without the hassle, a gas fireplace is a fantastic choice. Thanks to modern technology, gas fireplaces are now more stylish and efficient than ever. Radiant gas fireplaces, for instance, circulate heat while keeping the surrounding area cooler—perfect for condos or homes with kids and pets. The best part? With the flick of a switch, you get an instant warm glow without any mess. Gas fireplaces are low-maintenance, cost-effective, and can be installed just about anywhere.

TIP: Consider adding glass or stones within the firebox of a gas fireplace. Not only do they help distribute the gas evenly, but they also add a touch of color, sparkle, and sophistication.

Electric Fireplaces When neither wood nor gas is an option, electric fireplaces come to the rescue. These "plug-and-play" units are perfect for condos or homes where a gas line isn't feasible. And don't underestimate them—today electric fireplaces have come a long way. Many models now artfully emulate the look of real flames,

complete with the sound of crackling logs and even a realistic "smoke" effect. They're easy to use and can bring that cozy fireplace feel to any interior.

TIP: When choosing a gas or electric fireplace, consider the BTU output. As a rule of thumb, you'll need about 40 BTUs per square foot of living space. So, a fireplace with 40,000 BTUs should comfortably heat a 1,000 sq. ft. space.

Now that you've chosen your fireplace, it's time to make it the star of the show. In my designs, I love using custom built-in shelving around the fireplace to frame it beautifully. A bold piece of artwork suspended above or placed on the mantel can also create a streamlined, stylish display. Even if your fireplace isn't functional, it can still serve as a stunning focal point. Arrange firewood neatly inside the alcove or decorate the mantel with seasonal decor or candles for a polished look.

Whether you're looking to install a new fireplace or revamp an existing one, the key is to find the right balance between style and functionality. Remember, this is a long-term investment, so take the time and do your research, and consult with a designer like myself or fireplace professionals. National brands like Regency Fireplaces (regency-fire.com) have great online resource materials as you begin your research into product options. In the end, your fireplace should not only complement your home's aesthetic but also bring warmth and joy for years to come.



Jessica Cinnamon is the award winning Principal Designer and founder of Toronto based Jessica Cinnamon Design Inc. The firm is a multi-disciplinary design company that has become known for creating stylish and well curated interiors. They provide complete bespoke residential design services throughout Toronto Ontario, the GTA, Cottage Country, Chicago, and Los Angeles. jessicacinnamon.com

