

***June 2012***  
***Latest Trends Newsletter***  
***"The Master Suite"***

When approaching this very important increment of space for the custom home, we must not forget the primary function of the master bedroom. A master bedroom must serve as a place of rest and intimacy, nothing more shall be allowed to interfere with this prime mission for the human body.

Simply stated, all too often we allow our habits to interfere with the primary mission of this space. We are guilty of bringing a measure of distraction, and I firmly believe that we partly suffer a true lack of intimacy and sharing a pure loving relationship with our partner. I will explain how we do this unconsciously as a result of our fast paced lifestyle and bad habits. Yes I mean "bad" habits. We import all measures of electronics into this space, i.e. television, computers, etc. We isolate ourselves from our partner in many situations, get all fired up watching a late show or finish up a hectic day with last minute emails or surfing the web. When we turn the lights out it's no wonder why we toss and turn and don't have a restful night's sleep.

When allocating space for the master suite and after agreeing to the use of this space, we can proceed to the layout and designate how much square footage this space will require.

An example project may proceed like this: We need to have a large enough room that we have a sitting area with doors leading out to a private patio. We also want a fireplace and a (ugh!) television. Should the budget allow for this much space, then the room measurements would probably result in at least 16'x18' or 288 square feet. The area could be slightly smaller and clearly larger as well.

Now it's time to address the master closet. This space can be all over the board depending on the family and budget of the home. I have personally never designed a closet too large and have in some homes, under protest, designed many too small. Again, this as in all rooms must be carefully examined and thoroughly discussed before "pen to paper" starts. Additionally, with all of the closet systems available, we can plan and achieve much more value from a smaller footprint.

The master bath or dressing area depends upon how you want to utilize this space as another room with the clear understanding of how the folks living here function. Shower verses tub, soaking tub verses air jet, separate vanities verses combined, etc. These important questions will normally be discussed early between the partners of the home. Remember there is usually a "messy" one in the mix so allocate enough room to allow him or her to feel at ease within their own home. Old habits are hard to change and life is too short for this person to always feel uncomfortable about their behavioral patterns, or more to the point, have the other person be encumbered with the "stuff."

The typical master bath is normally a five piece fixture arrangement, i.e. shower, 2 vanities, tub, and commode. When I have the opportunity for input, I suggest that we access the master closet from this space also. This allows a person to enter one door, wash and dress in one expanded area without having to move from the bedroom to the closet, bath, etc. I have found over time that this arrangement has served my clients well. Especially the homeowners that had not experienced this approach before. Knowing your clients sleeping arrangements, and identifying the "early riser" is another function of extreme importance when planning for the most comfortable living in this room arrangement. An example might be that John rises early and Joan likes to sleep another hour before starting her day. The first consideration might allow for John to have the closet access to the bath behind a privacy door so he will create a minimum interruption to Joan. Another convenience in this all inclusive space planning is a separate exit door from possibly the master closet to the living area of the home. Again these are tried examples and found to be excellent traffic patterns for our clients.

Each master suite needs to be a refuge for the folks living there similar to a small and private studio apartment or hotel suite. The master bath could be a private and intimate spa. Again, I'm not suggesting a large amount of cash designated here, rather a significant amount of "creative juices" flowing among the design team for the most positive and exciting results.

The ceiling heights of the suite are of particular concern for my approach to the sleep well scenario I've discussed before. Many of us have lived in or have at least seen very tall ceilings in a master bedroom. While aesthetically this approach may be dramatic in photos or exciting when visiting someone's master suite, but does the large volume really result in creating restful sleeping quarters? I truly declare that it will not. To further explain my position on this subject I will expand this theory beyond the physical structure. Most folks like to "cuddle" either with their partner, or even "cuddle pillows," right? We came from very small quarters, i.e. cabins, shelters, lofts, barns, and yes even caves. These small spaces served us well throughout our human history and continue to work for more than 80% of humans worldwide. We American's in the land of excess can afford to have larger homes, thus larger sleeping quarters. Many times we simply make these spaces larger than necessary for truly comfortable space allocation.

The space over the sleeping area i.e. the bed, needs only to remain at no greater distance than two feet over the tallest person living there, i.e. 6 foot tall person equals 8 foot tall ceiling. I can hear your grumbling. I'm right here! I stated the option height should not exceed this, but again personal preferences do prevail over reason. See how I cleverly stuck that into the mix... Just remind yourselves of the nights in a cozy cabin, tent, or possibly an RV when you had the best night of sleep. Think back for the intrinsic value of these small spaces and what a profound impact the space left on you. Of course you may be rallying a night from "hell" without any sleep, rain, bugs, etc., but try and understand where I am taking you for this exercise.

When approaching this all important space, remember how this article was started and the statements made. Rest and intimacy are the most important considerations and indeed the major function for the master suite. Every homeowner's opinion on this space requires careful examination and positive concern for the individuals. If a homeowner wants a hot tub in the suite, home office as part of the space, or a man size flat screen in the room, they are the ones living there, so design the space accordingly.

I very carefully explain my personal theories and try so very hard to allow them to explore the alternatives, and then proceed to design the master suite the way they want, but I do try.

Should you have any questions or want to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me at [www.kenpieper.com](http://www.kenpieper.com)

Until next time enjoy the process!

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