

What's your design style?

Are you a retro bohemian or a sleek minimalist? Find out your design style with our quick quiz, then read on to discover how to get in touch with your aesthetic side.

Words **Susan Redman**

WHEN it comes to decorating, it pays to know your inner stylist. Especially since your two best friends seem so effortlessly intimate with theirs. Without hesitation, Anna, for example, gravitates to dark, rich colours, exotic pieces and vintage finds with an intriguing history. Julie, on the other hand, is chic yet sensible, hates clutter and fills her home with understated elegance and strategically positioned heirlooms. To confound you even further, both seem to innately understand how to accentuate their style with mood lighting and colour, while the only thing you can be sure of drawing attention to in your home is a hotchpotch of disparate ideas and general mess.

For better or worse, our homes are an extension of who we are and an expression of personality. But pop culture philosopher Alain de Botton, author of *The Architecture Of Happiness*, has a much deeper assessment that gives hope to those of us still trying to sort out just what our sofa says about us: "What we call a beautiful house is one that rebalances our misshapen natures and encourages emotions which we are in danger of losing sight of... we respect a style which can move us away from what we fear and towards what we crave."

It's a comforting thought that we all aspire to live in harmony by surrounding ourselves with beauty. But, still, how do we find that style we so "respect"? Or, put simply, what kind of wall clock will get us ticking? The stainless-steel industrial disc, sans numerals? Or the post-modern, acid-yellow cuckoo clock?

Award-winning interior designer Andrew Parr of SJB Interiors (sjb.com.au), urges us not to be coy. Take a bold approach, he advises, as this will present a style template. "Make a decision to be monochromatic, contrasting or loud and vibrant and remain true to this general vision," he says. "Observe items that capture your imagination and remember them in your compositions. Try to mix polished against matt, rough against smooth and, finally, observe how simple repetitive items or groupings make maximum impact."

Sought for her calming "modern style that is not too hard-edged", interior designer Lisa Stein (lisasteininteriors.com.au) says it's a matter of getting focused. "Think about how you already live and dress, what colours you are drawn to, what shapes in furniture you like and what textures bring you comfort," she says. She also suggests you start filing magazine clippings and to make a mental note of favourite



items already in your house. "These can form the basis of a whole new look," she says.

It's about eliminating the ho-hum and accentuating directional pieces. "You can't go far wrong with a warm, contemporary look that can be embellished and mixed up with antiques or family treasures," Stein says.

Of course, having an eye for style is made better with experience but if you are just getting started there are four main decorating themes to choose from.

Winning the popularity contest is modern – think clean lines, solid colours and designer-labelled furniture. This look has industrial chic and sanitised minimalism at its extremes but somewhere in the middle you'll find a softer option perfectly suited to busy lifestyles.

Traditional is an aesthetic usually built around historical elements like antiques or reproduction furniture. These are stocked at top-shelf retailers and include sub-styles like French provincial, country or romanticism.

Then there is retro, which borrows from mid-20th century modernism but includes Scandinavian design, 1950s tiki and pop art.

Hardest to define but equally enduring is ethnic or bohemian. It's a style that takes cues from the well-travelled collector. Asian, African or South American influences are obligatory – it's the Lonely Planet answer to interior design.

Luke Harrison, general manager of the International School of Colour and Design, says the quiz (opposite) will categorise

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Take your pick ... (clockwise from above) nostalgic nest; Hamptons white wash; New York loft; sleek new earth; sophisticated retro.

readers into one of five groups: sleek new earth, Hamptons white wash, New York loft, sophisticated retro and nostalgic nest – intriguingly, the leading trend.

According to Harrison, its popularity is a sign of the times. "People don't have the budget these days, so we have to be more creative in our choices and personalise a look," he says. "Nostalgic nest is the style you can't buy from a shelf. You have to mix the old with the new. It's the most individualised of the all the groups."

Sounds like at the end of the day it's all up to you. But don't forget, stay focused and don't be afraid to branch out ...

To find out more about your style or discover more about decorating to suit your own style, the International School of Colour and Design is holding a free Personal Style Discovery Workshop on March 21 from 10am to 1pm. Bookings essential, phone 9114 5988. See iscd.edu.au

Take the test of discovery

1. Which items would you most likely accessorise your home with?

- a Sea shells
- b Key designer pieces
- c Artefacts from travels
- d Items inspired from nature
- e Lots of pieces inspired from the past

2. Which of the following activities would you ideally like to do?

- a Walk on the beach
- b Dress up
- c Make things
- d Anything outdoors
- e Shop for antiques

3. Which colour would you most likely find in your home?

- a Neutral palette
- b Metallic palette
- c Warm palette
- d Earth palette
- e Cool palette

4. Which of the following movies would you rent first?

- a *Something's Gotta Give*
- b *Lost In Translation*
- c *The Notebook*
- d *An Inconvenient Truth*
- e *Casino Royale*

5. Which colour are you most attracted to?

- a White linen
- b Charcoal
- c Coffee bean brown
- d Rainforest green
- e Ripe cherry red

6. Which of the following best describes where you buy your clothes from?

- a Department stores
- b High Street boutiques
- c A mix of places
- d Eco-friendly/socially responsible retailers
- e Shopping centres



distinctive, yet ever-evolving and true to your own self – you don't buy off the shelf. High ceilings, open-plan, rich and luxurious are key components. You pick up on trends but integrate them into your life. While you enjoy the finer things in life, you fill your home with loved memories and key pieces collected over time. A balance of function and excess.

Mostly Cs: Nostalgic Nest

Like a bower bird, you collect bits and pieces. You are earthy, sentimental, individual and your home is rich with detail. You treat your home as a gallery filled with happy memories, photo albums, unique souvenirs from travels and your own made treasures. Displaying your true self on the walls, your collection tells a story. Spending time away from the home – outdoors and exploring – is just as important as spending time in the home. You are not concerned with what your neighbours' homes are like: you are true to your own style.

Mostly Ds: Sleek "New Earth"

You love the outdoors and bring that into your living environment. The technological side of the environment is considered. You evaluate trends and bring those that complement your lifestyle into your home.

Mostly Es: Sophisticated Retro

You recognise and respect good design from the past and present. You pick up key pieces over time and enjoy making them work together. While you are aware of innovations, you do not necessarily follow trends. As you are both confident and authentic, you have been collecting pieces for years and you display them with pride in abstract ways in your home.

This quiz was developed by the International School Of Colour And Design to show people the various styling trends available to them. It is not a determiner of a definite style but is intended to open your eyes to the manifold different decorating styles. These five decorating styles are the most relevant for our current lifestyle.

ANSWERS

Mostly As: Hamptons White Wash

You don't live by the sea, you live with the sea. You like a calm and balanced environment. Your home is treasured and a temple to all you love. You fill it with loved memories, often with pieces that have a story to tell. You love details (sea shells, raffia) and you create your home to be a central meeting point – an environment for people to come together and spend time. Rooms go beyond their initial function (eg, the kitchen is used not only to prepare food).

Mostly Bs: New York Loft

A global trendsetter. You believe the built environment is more spectacular than the natural one and you're hooked on architectural detail. Your style remains



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