

Plan the layout before you buy a single piece

Plan the layout in seven steps

1 Map the room on graph paper

Each square equals one foot. Mark windows, doors, structural columns, and vents. Walk the room and note the natural circulation paths.

2 Identify the anchor in each zone

Living anchor is usually the sofa. Dining anchor is the table. Reading or workspace anchors are usually a chair. Place the anchor first.

3 Float the sofa: do not push it against the wall

In open concept rooms, the sofa back becomes the boundary between living and walking zones. Leave at least 18 inches behind it.

4 Set rug sizes by zone

Living: at least the front legs of every seat on the rug, ideally all four legs. Dining: 24 inches of rug past the table on every side so chairs stay on the rug when pulled out.

5 Add a low divider

A walnut credenza, a long bench, or a curved console behind the sofa creates a soft boundary at hip height.

6 Hang pendants over zones

One pendant centred over the dining table, a separate pair over the living seating area. Pendants change ceiling height visually.

7 Vary ceiling treatments if you can

Different paint colours on a ceiling cove, exposed beam, or even a textured wallpaper section signals zone change at the top of the eye.