



# HOW TO DRESS UP WINDOWS

Curtains, shades and blinds—where to start, and what to do? Award-winning designer Tennille Wood helps to demystify the process of choosing window treatments.

BY GAIL HARTMAN

## 10 GOLDEN RULES

1. **Think function.**  
“We always start with a functional conversation: How is this room going to function, and how are the windows going to be part of that?” says Wood. Do you need the window treatments to provide privacy or not? Do you need to block out the sun, and if so, for all day or just part of the day? Do you want to be able to uncover your windows completely during part of the day? Does a room tend to get cold and therefore need the thermal protection of heavy curtains?
2. **Consider overall design.**  
“You also want to think about the overall design of the room and how the windows can accentuate the rest of the design,” Wood says. “Window treatments are such a great opportunity to play up patterns or colors in a room.”
3. **Don’t try to be matchy-matchy.**  
“A lot of people have the mistaken notion that they need to have the same kind of window treatment—the same color of blinds, the same style of curtain—throughout their entire house. That’s not true. Just as you don’t worry about decorating every room in a house the same way, you don’t have to have identical window treatments. Throw that rule out.”
4. **But be aware of sight lines.**  
“If you have a really open-concept house with rooms that are open to each other, those window treatments, just like all of your décor, need to complement each other and work together. Sometimes we might do drapery panels in one room and then use the same fabric in valances in an adjacent room.”
5. **Mix function and style.**  
“A perfect example of that: We had a west-facing room with three sets of French doors. We wanted something that could be open in the morning, but close in the afternoon because the sunlight coming in then was just unbearable. So we went with a soft Hunter Douglas product that slides across

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LIBBY MARTIN

**T**o curtain or not to curtain—that is the question. Many of us feel confident picking out a rug or a sofa or tiles, but selecting a window treatment? It feels like Ph.D.-level stuff. Designer Tennille Wood of Beautiful Habitat Interior Design, who just won an important window treatment award, knows all about that. “Often people feel that curtains are too formal or they have a vision in their heads of very fussy, old-fashioned window designs,” she says. “They default to functional window treatments like blinds or shutters or shades, and that’s often where they stop.” If you see yourself in that statement, Wood’s advice is: Don’t stop. Following are her tips for doing window treatments right.



the doors when needed. Then to add color, we put valances above those windows and used the same fabric in pillows for the chairs and sofa to pull it all together.”

6. Mix plain and pattern.

“Window treatments aren’t like pillows, where you can switch them out every six months. So something to consider is to do a plain drapery and a patterned valance, which is loose fabric, or a cornice board, which is upholstered, above it, which you can change when you get tired of it. That is a less expensive investment if you think you might want to later change the room.”

7. Go to the floor.

“Even if the window ends just halfway down the wall, take the curtains all the way to the floor—and cut them off there. The ‘puddle look,’ with overlong drapes that puddle on the floor, is out.”

8. Go all Roman on us.

“For contemporary homes, where people have large windows and want a lot of light, I will often do Roman shades. It’s a way of getting pattern and color and texture in the room, but you can pull the shades all the way to the top, and out of the way, when you want views and sunlight.”

9. Don’t scrimp on hardware.

“There are so many options these days for curtain rods, and I see them as the jewelry of a room, another element that pulls everything together. You can pick up wood tones of furniture or floors, you can add finials at the ends, and today there are all sorts of custom colors that you can get, too.”

10. Never think it’s too late.

“So often I will be brought in after clients have ‘done a room’ so they already have really nice shutters and a neutral sofa and maybe an area rug but they’ll tell me, ‘It just doesn’t look right’ and I will say, ‘OK, let’s add some draperies and coordinating pillows, and it’s going to make all the difference. You’ll see.’”



### Glass Menagerie

Tennille Wood of Beautiful Habitat Interior Design won an award from Window Fashion Vision at the International Window Coverings Expo for her window treatment above. The project involved a bowed window and a vaulted ceiling, which she tied together with beautiful valances. Wood used full-length curtains that block the sun when closed in the office at left and multi-colored, full-length curtains in the dining room, bottom.