

# Blank Slate

Fun colors and punchy prints give one couple's newly built home a chic look that will last

JACKSONVILLE,  
FLORIDA



The walls are painted Overcast by Benjamin Moore. The striped chair and pillow fabric is by Perennials.

The best thing about building your home from the ground up is that the design options are wide open. So when Shaara and Brian Swallow began construction on theirs in 2011 in Jacksonville, Florida, they saw a chance for a fresh start. "Our old house was sleek and modern. I wanted our new space to be stylish, too, but brighter and more fun," says Shaara. They also needed furniture that would hold up to the wear and tear of a growing family. Enter designer Andrew Howard, who hit upon just the right formula of drama and durability, infusing rooms with saturated hues and graphic prints, and grounding them with neutral pieces in kid-proof materials, such as Sunbrella and sisal. Here, how to style a home that's sophisticated but not at all stuffy.

**1 PLAY UP A SPLASHY PRINT.** The same wavy-stripe fabric on the breakfast room's chairs and banquette pillows also shows up on the kitchen barstools (page 20). "We let that pattern be the star by pairing it with subtler pieces, like an oak table and natural shades," says Howard. ►



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The cabinetry is painted White Diamond by Benjamin Moore. The backsplash tiles are from Waterworks.

“WE CHOSE CHAIRS WITH BACKS BECAUSE THEY’RE MORE COMFORTABLE FOR THE KIDS AND GUESTS”



The walls are painted Gray Sky and the trim is painted White Dove, both by Benjamin Moore. The light fixture is by Visual Comfort.

## 2 PLAN FOR A CROWD.

Because the Swallows’ big, extended family lives nearby, the kitchen is always party-ready. Guests congregate at the oversize island, topped with Calacatta gold marble; two antique mirrored cabinets keep pots, pans, and cooking tools hidden for a clutter-free space. “We chose chairs with backs because they’re more comfortable for the kids and guests to sit in,” says Shaara.

## 3 CHOOSE BREEZY HUES.

The living room is open to the kitchen, so Howard kept the look airy, painting the walls a pale blue and the backs of the built-in bookcases a soft green, to let the white accents pop. Weathered boards on the ceiling warm up the space. The room is large enough to fit a few seating areas, but one big grouping of sofas and chairs works better for conversation flow. ►



**4 SNEAK IN SUBTLE DETAILS.** Stairways are often an overlooked space. Howard made this one grander by adding textured paneling in two colors (white and light gray) and creating a gallery wall of framed prints leading up the steps. A round table leaves more room for a walkway—and without sharp corners, it’s a safer pick for a home with small kids.



The table is by Mitchell Gold, and the rug is by Dash & Albert.



The window trim is painted Rosy Glow by Benjamin Moore. The bed is from West Elm.



The walls are painted Gray Wisp by Benjamin Moore. The sofa is by Lee Industries.

**5 INJECT PERSONALITY.** Shaara loves pink, but it just didn’t fit in with the home’s palette. Howard’s fix: work the color into the spare guest room. “You get more power from pink when you use it in smaller doses,” he says. He kept the walls cream and used pink on just the window trim, with a tulip-print shade. Rosy-hued sheets, pillows, and gourd lamps round out the look.

**6 CARVE OUT A QUIET HIDEAWAY.** The Swallows don’t often get a chance to use the seating area in their bedroom, but when they do sit on the sofa to read or relax, the secluded spot feels like a luxury. Howard paired the linen sofa and chairs with a white coffee table to continue the muted color scheme. **For more information, see Sources, page 118.**

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