

How to Display Collectibles



You've heard the old adage, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Well never is this more true than with collectibles. During our home decorating adventures, Matt and I have run across just about every kind of collection imaginable. We've seen collections of baskets, salt and pepper shakers, and teapots. We've worked with homeowners who wanted to display their pig collections, matchbook cover collections, or pottery collections. We've used old maps in dens, vintage hat boxes in bedrooms, and brightly colored carnival glass in china cupboards.

While these collections may vary, Matt and I have discovered some commonalities when it comes to their acquisition and display.

Lesson 1: Collections are always a work in progress.

Collectors everywhere understand this concept. While you may need a minimum of three items to officially be declared a collection, for most collectors there is no upper limit.

For true collectors, it's all about the thrill of the hunt. Whether scouring flea markets, thrift stores, or estate auctions, there is a real sense of excitement at finding a new and unusual addition, especially if it's a bargain. This leads directly to the next lesson.



Lesson 2: You don't have to show off your entire collection at once.

Too much of a good thing can rapidly develop into clutter. Rather than display your entire collection of elephants, why not divide your collection into groupings? Look through your collection to determine which items work best together. For added interest, vary the shapes and colors in the display. After a few months, rotate in a few different pieces, changing the display as often as you like. Although there are no fast and firm rules to follow when you create these groupings, I've found that your collections can be easily displayed by following a few simple design tips.

Tips:



Arrange items in your collection in odd numbered groupings.

*For the greatest impact, display your collection in a single area rather than scattering it throughout your home.

*To add visual interest, vary the heights in the grouping. Mix large and small pieces, using small pedestals or stands to elevate objects.

*Create depth by alternating pieces from back to front instead of placing them in a straight line. You might try placing three objects in a triangular shape with the tallest pieces in back. Depending on the number of items in your collection, you can create multiple triangles, overlapping them as necessary.

Matt and I have found that collectibles are often displayed on shelving units.

While placing your collectibles can be a challenge, it's also very satisfying. For a great look, vary the distance between the shelves. If you are using two matching units, change the height of the shelves by adding an extra shelf to one unit, while removing a shelf from the other.

To achieve a very formal look, use symmetrical placement of accessories. For a more casual look, asymmetrical groupings work well.

To create an attractive display, it's important that your shelves appear balanced. In order to achieve this balance, I usually place the largest items first. I try to alternate the heights from one shelf to another in a sort of zigzag pattern. On open shelves, I begin by placing the largest item in the center of the middle shelf.

The next step is to begin to fill in the open spaces with smaller, colorful objects. Use different shapes and materials. Don't be afraid to mix in some silk greenery with your collection. It's a great way to add both color and texture.



Before you say you are finished with your display, step back and check your work. Are there areas that seem overly crowded? Does one shelf seem a bit bare? Don't get discouraged if you are dissatisfied with your first attempt. It may take several days and numerous rearrangements before you find your perfect display.



Shelves aren't the only places to display your collectibles. Achieve the unexpected by displaying your smaller treasures on window sills, or larger items in an unused fireplace.

This collection of antique fishing rods is shown off nicely with a handmade display system. The rods can be even be used by picking the handle up off the hook and pulling the end of the pole through the hole. Pretty catchy huh?





This collection of sea shells wouldn't work on a shelf. However, the glass vases show off the details very nicely. Objects like this could be displayed in a collection coffee table or in a shadowbox frame.

A collection of fine pen and ink landscape prints all framed identically is displayed with real pride on this staircase wall. The look is fabulous and just imagine the talent it took to hang them so perfectly!



A collection of colorful dinnerware can either be used for dining, or it can be turned into an artistic display. This grouping was fun to hang and the design began on the floor. Once the arrangement took shape horizontally, we measured it, to a quick photo of it and started the hanging process from just above the fireplace and worked up the wall.

There is one drawback to displaying your collectibles. They can be difficult to dust, especially if you find yourself reluctant to disturb an arrangement that took weeks to perfect. There is however, a simple way around this problem. Once you've achieved that perfect look, take a picture, just like we did with the arrangement of plates. After dusting, a quick look at the photo will lead you back to perfection in minutes.

Remember, your collections reflect your personality and style, just like this collection of guitars and duck decoys. Using them to accessorize your home doubles the fun of collecting. So go ahead – display that rooster collection with pride! (I think I will!)

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