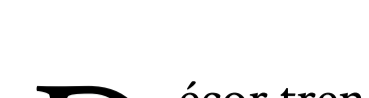




NEWS • HOME TRENDS

Are Open Concepts Really Falling Out of Favor?

WRITTEN BY HEATHER BIEN | Updated on Sep 08, 2021



Decor trends come and go. One day the '70s are back, the next the '80s are making an appearance. Even centuries-old [Victorian design](#) is getting its moment in the sun again. But where do open concepts fall on the trend timeline? They've been popular since the latter half of the twentieth century, so is it time for them to take a backseat?

With more time spent at home over the past year-and-a-half, some designers predict that open concept may finally fall out of favor. Working in a home office that's in earshot of virtual schooling children, a spouse on a conference call, and pets running wild is less charming than the open concept's original plan of a family cooking, dining, and lounging in one perfect, harmonious room.

But plenty of designers are staying true to the open floor plan. If you've watched any house hunting show in the past year, you know that the first words out of many peoples' mouths when they look to renovate or buy are, "open concept." These designers believe that as long as people live together in one space, they'll want to be together in an open concept floor plan.

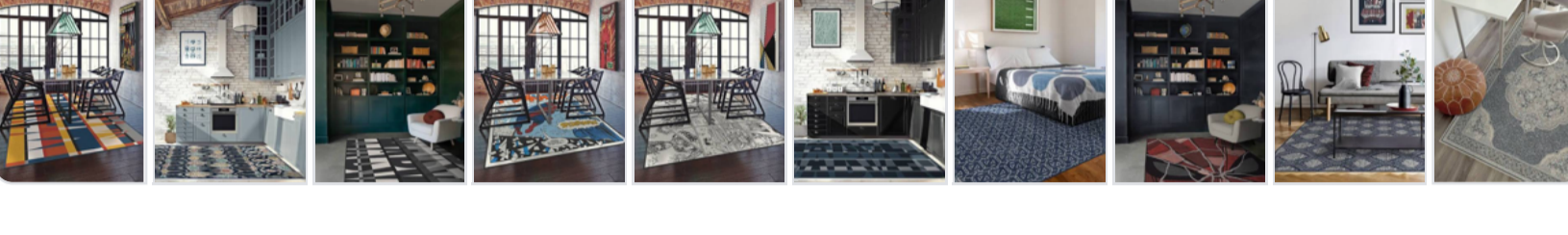
We spoke with five experts about why they'll continue to embrace the open floor plan—or why they're ready to close the door on open concept.

Bring the Excitement of Discovery Back



HECTOR MANUEL SANCHEZ, DESIGN: JEREMY D. CLARK STUDIO

Imagine walking through a home where behind each door is a hidden surprise. Jewel boxes of rooms await you and the unexpected is at every turn. That's exactly why Jeremy D. Clark, of [Jeremy D. Clark Studio](#) in Mountain Brook, Alabama, believes it's time to put the open floor plan behind us.



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"Open floor plans work only in a small percentage of homes. While the thought of light and airy sounds appealing, and is perfect for a coastal getaway or modernist space, the actual livability of limited privacy and no sound reduction can be extremely frustrating. Moreover, mechanically it doesn't seem to work, and more than that, I find that aesthetically a home is more intriguing when you aren't immediately exposed to the entire space. The discovery process from space to space is, and should be, exciting!"

Shut the Door on Open Concept Living

[Lisle McKenna](#), an interior designer based in New York and Connecticut, agrees that it's time for the open floor plan to bid adieu — at least for the time being. The way most people are living now requires the ability to literally shut the door on certain parts of life and move on with the day. That's not possible in an open floor plan.

She says, "After living in open concepts for a time we all started to see the flaws in the design, and life during Covid only highlighted them. Having your kitchen, family room, and dining area all open into one another means there is no privacy, there is noise pollution from one space to the next, and there is no easy way to escape any mess. Prior to open concept living, houses were intentionally built with doors between the kitchen and the dining room, so that you could literally shut the door on the dishes and go back to enjoying yourself at the dinner table. With an open concept there is no hiding from those dishes. A bit of the magic of moving from room to room, with different moods and atmospheres, is also lost if the spaces are not divided. I think we are all craving more of that variety after living without it."

People Still Want to See Grand, Open Rooms

On the other hand, Killy Scheer of [Scheer & Co.](#), points out that most homes are still built with open concept in mind and, while people may want to see a home office, they want an overall open floor plan.

Scheer says, "I keep hearing buzzing about open concepts being a thing of the past, but I still see most new builds with vast and open great rooms, so I think it's here to stay for a bit and on a grander scale. However, with more people working from home and uncertainty about going back to offices, most people need to find ways to carve out some privacy so there's a good chance the pandemic might accelerate the shift away from open concepts."

Open Concept Living is Practical for Parents

Lifestyle plays a role in whether the open concept works. For those with kids, Shaolin Low of [Studio Shaolin](#), knows that, even if noise is an issue, the functionality of parents being in the same room as their children will always win out.

"I'm a huge fan of open concept living for its practicality in parenting (you can see where everyone is at all times) and for when you do have people over; it's easier for people to be in different spaces but still in the same big space. Lifestyle is usually what dictates whether open concept works best for a family or not, but in an overall every day look/feel, open concept is still a winner."

Communal Spaces Will Remain Open

McCall Dulkys, of [Interiors by McCall](#), trusts that even if people decide to turn bonus spaces into home offices to accommodate the way of living now, they will still look to open concepts in main living areas. People want to be together — even if they need time apart. She says, "The pandemic has definitely taught us that we need our designated personal spaces within the home, but I don't think that necessarily means we're doing away with open concept floor plans. I'm seeing clients forgo that extra guest bedroom to prioritize a home office space but they're still wanting those communal spaces to be open. As a mom, I think there will always be value in an open floor plan and being able to keep tabs on everyone with a simple glance."

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