



How to live with a big flat screen

Decorating with the newest must-have home technology

By Lou Manfredini

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Technology changes everything. Think about it. Before we had cars, there was no such thing as a drive-through window. Before electricity, there were no electric blankets. How did we get by? The examples are endless.

One current technology that is changing our way of life is the ever-popular flat screen television. Now I am not going to write about whether LCD or plasma are better, or how many DPI's one should have. Rather, I'm going to write about how you're supposed to design and decorate around these large, flat, typically dark panels.

Flat screens have changed the way rooms are designed, built and furnished. No longer do you need a large entertainment center that is almost three feet deep and takes up precious room space. But if hanging a monitor on your wall makes you feel like you're at Terminal 1 at Chicago's O'Hare airport (my hometown airport), then read on.

New-look entertainment centers

There are many different ways to mount these units, either on the wall or on specially designed furniture that is sleek and compact. But remember that you get what you pay for, and you want furniture that will last. So investing in higher quality only makes sense here. Standout Design's makes a complete line of solid hardwood constructed entertainment centers. Their Radius Series units are one of my favorites with a blend of cherry wood and stainless steel accents. Made in Pennsylvania these pieces sell between \$899.00-\$1,250.00 www.standoutdesigns.com.

Mounting on the wall

If you decide to mount your new flat screen on the wall, you have some options to consider. First, you must mount the brackets to the framing of your walls, also known as the "studs." These units can be heavy and you must ensure that the hardware is securely fastened. Also the correct hardware is not cheap. Expect to spend anywhere from \$50.00 to \$500.00, depending on the style and weight capabilities.

The basic differences in hardware are "flat mount," which will anchor your monitor parallel to the wall it is mounted to. It will be the sleekest look when completed. These brackets are typically the most affordable, too.

"Angle mount" allows you to tilt the monitor slightly down towards the viewing area. This type is best suited when the monitor is mounted higher on the wall to position the plane of the screen for better sight lines. Imagine over a fireplace, or above a bookcase.

Finally there are "articulating brackets." These allow you to rotate your flat screen to virtually any position, flat, angled, or pulled away from the wall to position the monitor towards different areas of a room depending on where you want to watch it from.

Cool cabinets

At a builder's show recently, I saw the best way to display, or not display, your flat screen. It's called the Reversica Gyre (pronounced "Ji-err"). When mounted in a custom cabinet, this hardware will rotate your TV 180 degrees. And on the flip side you can have book shelves. It can hold up to 600 pounds, too. The hardware company works with builders and cabinet makers to provide the hardware for your project. www.reversica.com.

The bookcase featured on TODAY is made by the Custom Shop in Watertown, Wisc. The cost for that unit is around \$7,500.00. www.customshoppefurniture.com. While it's an investment, you have to admit it, it's one heck of a conversation piece and it allows you a truly creative way to decorate and furnish around technology

that is going to be around for a long time.

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