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# A Family FARMHOUSE

This farmhouse in Vancouver, Canada, celebrates timeless elegance and flawless functionality for a family of six and a few furry friends.

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In the first few months of the new year, winter makes its last run, and residents of Vancouver, Canada, look forward to the season's last snowfall and take in the breathtaking view of snow-capped mountains. This year, husband and wife Josh and Amanda Penner and their four children are among those happy homeowners. After undergoing a redesign with trusted advisor Ben Leavitt, Creative Director of PlaidFox Design, the couple's riverside house is in the perfect condition for the whole family to enjoy.



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**(above)** The Penners prefer a clean and tidy house, and a minimalist design works well in the kitchen. The room wouldn't be complete without a few colorful bouquets and the statement pendant lighting.

**(opposite, top)** Playing with lines brings the home to life. While white shaker cabinets pay homage to traditional farm cottage style, the curvy range hood above the stove adds character to the kitchen.

**(opposite, bottom)** Color contrast is a must in an all-white kitchen. Here, the navy island and hardwood floors help to ground the room and create a cozy living space.

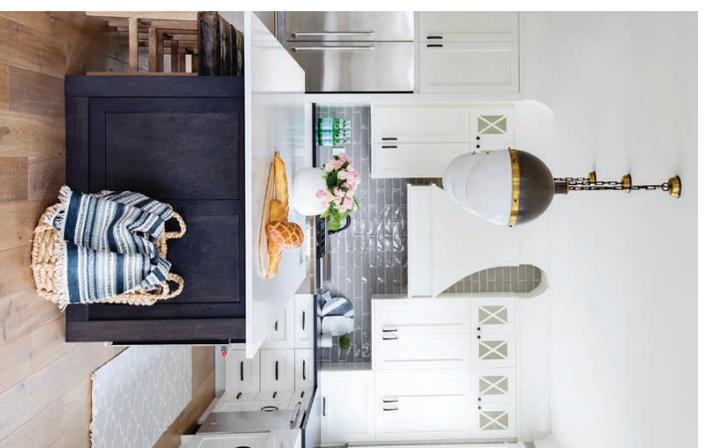
### NEW BEGINNINGS

Vancouver may have one of the world's most scenic skylines, but the city has a short history—its oldest buildings are only 100 years old. The architecture is modern and contemporary, reflecting trends that may come and go. But when Ben redesigned the Penners' house, he sought to create a place with heritage and history. "I wanted the home to feel current and classic," he says.

The design team altered the exterior and amped up the curb appeal. While the original design reflected a contemporary West Coast vibe, Ben and his team transformed it into a "quintessential East Coast exterior" with navy walls and a yellow door.

### CLASSIC GUES

Inside, Ben embraced the same goals. To blend the East Coast exterior with the interior, he employed traditional design elements inside the home. Rather than focus on trending ideas such as a floating staircase, he created a traditional staircase with wooden rails and a carpet runner. This adds a sense of timeless class to the entryway.



## SHOULD YOU DESIGN AN OPEN KITCHEN?

Open floor plans for the kitchen and living areas are certainly on trend. But when considering one for yourself, think carefully about the needs of your family. Here are Ben Leavitt's thoughts on the pros and cons of an open design.

### PROS

- **NATURAL LIGHT.** Open floor plans tend to have more windows than closed galley kitchens. This can be great if you live in a sunny area, or even just want to enjoy the rain and snow in a northern location.
- **APPEARANCE OF MORE SPACE.** If your home is small, an open kitchen adds a spacious quality to the main level. It helps cultivate a family atmosphere by creating a central hub for all residents to come together. It also allows you to have more cooks in the kitchen, whether you're having your kids help with the dishes or you're hosting a party.

**Bottom line:** "The pros of an open concept kitchen are in the name itself," Ben says. "It's open, it's airy, it's bright."

### CONS

- **NOISE.** In a house with fewer walls, sound travels, and privacy is almost nonexistent. If the TV is playing in the family room, chances are you'll hear it loud and clear in the kitchen—whether or not you want to.
- **MESS.** It's harder to contain a mess in a larger space. If you have young children, keeping their toys in an enclosed playroom is probably a better option than an open living room/kitchen.

**Bottom line:** "When the kitchen is messy, so is your house," Ben says.

# Classically NEUTRAL

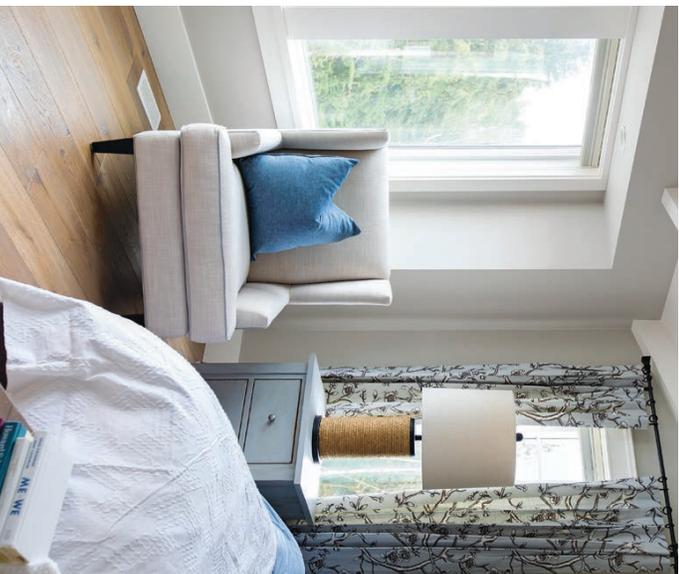
A neutral color palette creates understated elegance that will last a lifetime. Use these 5 tips to maximize your subtle shades.

- 1. USE THE RIGHT NEUTRALS.** Even with neutrals, there are classic and trendy shades. White, black, silver and gold are timeless choices. Steer clear of trendy colors such as rose gold and gray.
- 2. INTRODUCE CONTRAST.** This is a concept we tout often in home decor, but it's not too complicated. White on white is beautiful, but it tends to blend together. Instead, pair your whites with darker colors to make the room pop. For example, couple white shaker-style cabinets with darker wood butcher-block countertops and black hardware.
- 3. DON'T FORGET TEXTURE.** Think about how a material feels to the touch—is it smooth or bumpy? Soft or rough? Physical texture also creates visual texture in a room. Mix glossy tile with grainy wood furniture, and use natural materials such as jute and rattan to add visual interest. Fabric accessories will add a softer quality to any space.
- 4. GO GREEN.** The hues of living plants don't register as color in the same way as a floral fabric or mosaic tile. Whether you set up a miniature greenhouse on the coffee table or grow a crate of herbs by your kitchen window, you can't go wrong with green plants to bring your home to life.
- 5. ACCESSORIZE.** The perfect way to experiment with color for different seasons is with small accessories you can easily remove. Add hair with a colorful bowl on your countertop or play with a few bright throw pillows. Let neutrals act as the base and decorate with splashes of color.



The master bedroom maintains a fairly neutral palette, with a few patterned fabrics and throw pillows to spice things up. (opposite, top) Josh and Amanda's daughter climbs the staircase to the second story with Oscar, their beloved tabby cat. The traditional design of the staircase, with its wood treads and stair runner, creates a timeless look. (opposite, bottom) The sunlight that streams in through the bedroom window adds a delightful, dreamy appeal.

**Tip**  
USE LIGHTING IN AREAS WHERE YOU WANT THE EYE TO TRACK UPWARD FOR ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS SUCH AS AN A-LINE ROOFLINE OR EXPOSED CEILING BEAMS



"I wanted the home to feel  
current and classic."



**Tip**  
IF YOU WANT TO ADD INTEREST TO YOUR FRONT DOOR FROM THE INSIDE, PAINT THE BACK OF THE DOOR A FUN COLOR. IF YOU LIVE IN AN AREA WHERE YOU AREN'T ALLOWED TO PAINT THE FRONT DOOR, PAINTING THE BACK IS A USEFUL ALTERNATIVE.

**(left)** The entrance to the home is airy and spacious. Amish-style walls and a pale yellow door, navy chairs and black lighting provide visual contrast, while the family dog, Piper, guards the foyer.

**(bottom, right)** Three different tile patterns create eye-catching appeal in the master shower, while matte black hardware adds dramatic contrast.

**(top, right)** Like the master bedroom, the master bathroom uses neutral to create a fresh look. Ben refers to the master bathroom as one of the best rooms in the house. "But you never really get to see it," he admits. Luckily, the Penners have an opportunity to show theirs off.

Inspired by the home's charming neighborhood and forested surroundings, the Penner family settled on a lakeside theme. It centered on a neutral color palette of white, navy and gold that played right into the traditional farmhouse design scheme.

**FAMILY FOCUSED**

After knocking down a few extra walls, Ben created an open concept kitchen, increasing the Penners' ability to live everyday life in the home. With both kids and pets abounding, the space needed to be functional and friendly to friends and relatives who come to visit. "The house is crazy," Ben says. "The kids are always bringing friends over, and they are always adopting a new pet." Because of this, the kitchen improves accessibility and ease of living. It creates a space for the kids to play with their friends, but it also gives Josh and Amanda the ability to host company, too. "It's one of the nicest rooms in the house, so it elevates the entire home," Ben says.

**BRIGHT IDEA**

Though most of the elements in the home err on the side of classical design, Ben advised the Penners to "choose modern lighting." This helps balance out the house. "The pendants above the island ride the line between traditional and modern, and I think that's the direction you want to go," Ben says. Eventually, lighting will go out of style. But the classic farmhouse architecture will stay timeless, and choosing a single element like lighting as a contemporary feature will be easy to replace when style preferences change.

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