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# Consumers Digest

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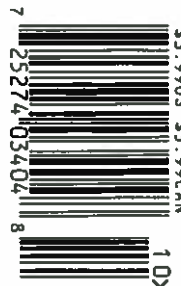
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# Marketplace

Home ■ Travel ■ Shopping



## Furniture fodder

If home is where the heart is, then furniture must be the veins and arteries that give an abode a pulse. Since we don't want you to miss a beat when picking out home furnishings, we asked Sheila Bridges, Time magazine's "America's Best Interior Designer" for 2002, for some tips.

**Some joint, eh?** For starters, when picking out furniture, "pay attention to joinery," she says. For example, if you want to buy a wood dresser, open the drawers to see how the boards connect. If boards are connected with glue or screws, chances are the piece isn't built to last; but if there are dovetail joints that interlace the piece, it should be solid. "You can't make a dovetail joint out of plywood even if you wanted to," she says. "Structurally, it just doesn't work."

**Test drive:** When people check out a car, they test everything, but Bridges believes people are too passive about trying out furniture. Sit on the couch and pull out the footrest to see if

it's comfortable. Open the dresser drawers. Just don't kick the curio cabinet!

**New and improved?** Some people assume that newer furniture is better, but that's not necessarily true, Bridges says.

There's a reason antique furniture has lasted generations, and that's because it's made well. As long as antiques suit your taste, don't rule out furnishing your home with older pieces. A great thing about antiques is you can haggle on price, which is harder to do with newer pieces.

### More the merrier:

Bridges says you get what you pay for, and cheaper furniture can cost more to repair than pricier pieces,

because the cheap stuff is often difficult to fix.

**These houses are for show:** To get inspiration on how to furnish a room, Bridges suggests doing an online search for "show houses" in your area. Often done as part of a charitable event, you can look at how professional designers put together different rooms, so you can borrow their ideas.

"It used to be that people always felt like they had to hire a professional interior designer or a professional interior decorator, and I think [the Internet, home magazines and interior-design-oriented TV shows] are giving people a lot more confidence to buy things and do things for themselves," Bridges surmises.

Bridges hosts "Sheila Bridges: Designer Living" on the Fine Living channel.

—J. Tehrani

## New low-fare carrier takes off

Expect more touch-downs in the nation's capital this fall, and we don't mean from the Washington Redskins. New low-fare airline Independence Air, which now flies out of Dulles International Airport, plans to increase its list of destinations to 35 cities and the frequency of its flights by autumn.

When the airline began operating in June, it only used small, 50-seat regional jets; by the end of the year, it plans to have its first order of larger Airbus jets ready for service to southern Florida and the West Coast.

On the smaller planes, there are only aisle and window seats and carry-on luggage is checked in at the doorway "for convenience," the airline says. There is a drink service, and you can get as many snacks as you want, while supplies last.

A spokesperson tells Consumers Digest that the airline trains its ground staff to have a "pit-crew mentality," so that the turnaround time at the gate is generally 30 minutes or less.

What's nice about the airline's Web site ([www.flyin.com](http://www.flyin.com)) is that it lists the lowest and highest one-way fare to each city. At presstime, the highest one-way fare was a ticket to or from Jacksonville, Fla., for \$178; the lowest fare was \$39 to or from Charleston, W.Va., Norfolk, Va., and Pittsburgh.

## Baby talk: Safety

Keeping children safe is a full-time, hands (and knees) on job, former TV producer Jamie Schaefer-Wilson, co-author of the book "The Baby Rules: The Insider's Guide to Raising Your Parents," tells Consumers Digest. And childproofing is only the first step.

"Next time you're on your hands and knees with your children, look around the room and think about ... what they see and what could happen," she says. "You'll be shocked."

An open dishwasher, even if empty, can be dangerous, she warns. The plastic spikes that keep dishes in place could cause serious injuries if a child were to fall on them. Another example is oven doors—hot or cold. When the heat is on, the oven is obviously off-limits; but when it's off, it could still be dangerous, she says. Some ranges are not fastened down, so if a child were to push on the oven door, they could knock over a pot or pan you've left on the stove.

Antique furniture may spruce up the house, but never put babies in antique cribs, Schaefer-Wilson warns, because they have catch points. A catch point can be a corner post that extends more than 1/16th of an inch above the top of the end panel. Children can get their clothing caught and accidentally hang themselves.

