Congratulations, new homeowner!

You've purchased a property that's all yours, where you and your family can make incredible memories as you grow. It's a big step (and an important one), but even though the papers are signed and the keys are turned over, you're not quite finished – yet.

To truly be a homeowner, the house you just bought needs to become more than a house – you need to turn it into your home. The right design elements can make that a cinch. Here are the five key design tips that will help turn your new house into a home.

Think about the Theme

If your new home purchase is a considerable step-up from the apartment you were just renting, it can be easy to get carried away day-dreaming about all that can be with every room. You might have three or more bedrooms, two or more bathrooms, a kitchen, a living room, a formal dining room, and even more that all need a personal stamp and funky design to make them come alive. Oh, the possibilities!

But cohesion is key: your entire home needs to retain one single, comprehensive theme and color palette that resonates across rooms – otherwise rooms can feel disjointed and the home can lose that "homey" quality.

A good place to start is with painting: painting your entire home with one cohesive color palette is an easy way to make the design transition from room to room seamlessly. Then you can let the individual furniture pieces, textiles or décor items of the space introduce character and difference in each room.

This doesn't mean that every room has to be white (far from it). Commit to a curated color palette that revolves around one neutral (grey and "greige" are so in right now), and then add accent colors that bring bursts of life to individual rooms.

Painting is a no-brainer design upgrade to add vibrant color: the cost is minimal, you can do it yourself, and it's an easy way to elevate a space and make it homey and beautiful while putting your stamp on it.

Mix Old and New

Here's a common new homebuyer faux-pas: many will hit the big furniture stores and go crazy.

They end up taking home entire living rooms, dining rooms, and bedrooms, and then walking through the house becomes like walking across a showroom floor: there's no individuality. Save yourself the embarrassment (and your wallet the massive hit).

Buy a few new signature pieces that will anchor the design of the house (a sofa, a dining table, and maybe your bedroom set), but then don't be afraid to incorporate old pieces, hand-me-downs, or even thrift-store finds. These long-loved pieces are what bring a home to life, and you'll be surprised how well they'll fit in with the new purchases you make.

Mixing old and new brings a homey and eclectic feel to space, and as long as you keep to your general theme, shouldn't create a clash.

Feng Shui your Space

You don't have to be a Feng Shui guru to appreciate (and implement) a few of its key and most critical elements.

Live plants in a space (especially in the kitchen above the cabinetry) paired with ample natural light can bring a real feel of Zen to any room. Another important tenet of Feng Shui is the featured piece. In your bedroom, let the biggest piece of furniture (IE the bed) serve as the visual focal point, and put it against the main wall so that when you walk into the space, you feel it really anchoring the rest of the room.

Finally, find somewhere pretty and central in your home to place a small Feng Shui water feature. Nothing says luxury and relaxed-living like the constant trickle of a well-placed fountain.

Don't Skimp on Lighting

Lighting is perhaps one of the most overlooked aspects of room design, and yet it's arguably the most critical.

A warm, well-lit room can make even the most drab and disjointed arrangement of furniture feel intentional, while a dim room casts nothing but shadows over the new bedroom set that you fell in love with at the store. Before you move furniture in, think critically about the ambient lighting in a space.

Rooms with big windows that give the opportunity for lots of natural light should be supported (IE don't hide those big windows!). Let soft, opaque curtains carry that natural

light through the room and into the halls.

Rooms that don't have big picture windows will need a boost when it comes to lighting: consider recessed lights in the ceiling or even in built-in furniture (nothing says luxury like an entertainment unit that lights itself!). Once your ambient lighting is well-established, move your furniture in. Then, figure out where additional lighting pieces are needed. Remember, everyone loves entertaining outside as well!

Well-placed floor lamps and paired lamps on end tables can serve as the cherry on top of a beautiful room. When it comes to good lighting, you'd rather have too much than too little.

Make it Yours

With well-placed furniture, curated lighting, thoughtful and cohesive color palette and Feng Shui design elements, your space is near perfect. Now make it your own: incorporate those elements of a space that just can't be bought in a store.

Hang family photos, paintings, wall clocks, and other heirlooms passed down over time. Fill your shelves with books and keepsakes. You can even let your clothes bring character to a space by putting hooks on bedroom walls (get those fun hats and beautiful scarves out of that closet and into the light!). While there's certainly something to be said for minimalism, blank walls and empty bookcases aren't exactly homey.

The goal is to ensure that your home screams "you," so let your treasured items do that for you by bringing them out and putting them on display. If you've thought about the theme and kept your home Feng Shui, you're not likely to risk being over-cluttered.

A home is what you make it, so don't shirk on the design and feel of the space. If you pour your heart (and unload character) into each room, you'll feel that homeyness every single day Congratulations again on the purchase of your first home: enjoy it!