



CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

How to transform even the most awkward areas into spaces that embody style and functionality in one

words aleczander gamboa



Left top Use a light, neutral hue for paint to subtly balance any asymmetry within your walls and ceiling. tilecloud.com.au **Left bottom** Prioritise texture and shape when selecting tiles and cabinetry to help inject visual interest into the space. tilecloud.com.au **Above** Gavin Rudd, Founder of Smart Kitchen Facelifts. smarkitchenfacelifts.com.au



Gavin Rudd, founder of Smart Kitchen Facelifts, adds that the general placement of cabinets and overall kitchen layout can be sore spots. “Due to the room size, homeowners may struggle to store their most-used items close to the areas where they actually use them. For example, if you are cooking a stir-fry and forget your favourite spice, you need to walk to the pantry, instead of just leaning to the left or right to open a dedicated drawer.”

Chelsea Shear, client liaison and trades coordinator at Deziign Kitchens, echoes a similar sentiment. “Kitchen and bathroom spaces can be pretty tight. In older buildings, there can also be some wonky walls and some quirky design features that make it super difficult if you’re trying to fit modular cabinet sizes into a space. Corners can also be tricky and can really mess with the functionality of a space if badly designed in a renovation.”

Whether designing a kitchen or bathroom within an existing space or from scratch, Kellie Richardson, founder of Kurved By Design, suggests always asking yourself a few key questions before tackling a challenging layout.

“How big is the area in which you want to redesign the kitchen and bathrooms? Will the bathroom and kitchen fit all your requirements, and will there be enough storage? By asking yourselves these questions, you start to highlight challenging areas in these spaces and how we can overcome them,” she says.



Whether you’re buying or building a home, kitchen and bathroom layouts can present their own set of unique challenges. From sloping roofs and sharp angles to oddly structured spaces, finding solutions for getting out of these tough spots can be mind-boggling for most people.

So, the next step? Ask the experts. We spoke to several Australian interior designers, stylists and manufacturers to get their perspectives on making the best of complex space issues.

IDENTIFY YOUR SPACE CHALLENGES FIRST

Before jumping into solution mode, quickly assessing your current kitchen and bathroom space always goes a long way. Cara Stepin, a designer from Impala Kitchens & Bathrooms, often sees U- and G-shape kitchens as being the most challenging for homeowners and designers alike due to “multiple corners with inaccessible storage, single entry and exit points, minimal spaces to access the fridge and dishwasher, plus restrictions to benchtop colours due to the joins in the material”.

Previous page Through clever strategy and design creativity, any kitchen and bathroom can become the space of your dreams by making the most of its shape, size and form. ausbuild.com.au

This page Before tackling a challenging space, always consider how big the area is, what you intend to use it for and if there are any opportunities to enhance storage to maximise floor space. ausbuild.com.au **Left** Courtney Cole, Interior Designer at TileCloud. tilecloud.com.au



Above Consider the slope a design feature that adds character and visual interest to the space, rather than a challenge. beaumont-tiles.com.au **Below** A well-placed skylight on the roof can bring natural light to spaces without windows, making them feel airy and brighter. beaumont-tiles.com.au **Right** Enhance the functionality of a space by adding custom cabinetry with the help of a professional. ausbuild.com.au



Above Emma Boulter, Ausbuild Expressions Design Studio Manager. ausbuild.com.au **Right** Kitchens with sharp angles are a popular trend for many modern contemporary homes. thouse.com.au



SLOPING CEILINGS

Sloping roofs can lead to wasted space, but if used correctly, they can become a highlight in the design aesthetics of your kitchen or bathroom. Tina Nettlefold, an interior designer, home renovator and founder of the not-for-profit homewares brand T.House, says it's an opportunity to embrace your abode's uniqueness.

"Rather than seeing them as limitations, integrate them into the design process. Utilise the slope as a feature, enhancing the character and visual interest of the space. Sloping ceilings can add drama and dimension, creating distinct zones within a room. For instance, in a kitchen, they can demarcate the cooking area from the dining space, adding depth to the layout," she notes.

"From a practical standpoint, it's essential to acknowledge the challenges of sloped ceilings. Installing fixtures and appliances might require innovative approaches. Consider tailoring storage solutions or selecting adjustable lighting fixtures to suit different heights."

Indeed, sloping ceilings are an opportunity to get creative with your kitchen and bathroom design. Like Tina, Beaumont Tiles product specialist Michelle Kearney advises using subtle additions to make sloping roofs and ceilings more visually appealing and open.

"Try installing a well-placed skylight on the roof. This can bring natural light to spaces without windows, making them feel airy and brighter," she suggests. "In the bathroom, where the roof slopes, try adding a bath for a cosy soak. This adds to the room's functionality and takes height out of the equation. Just ensure the ceiling above is at least 2.1m to comply with the National Building Code."

ODD LAYOUTS

For any odd nooks and crannies, Ausbuild Expressions Design Studio manager Emma Boulter recommends enhancing functionality by adding custom cabinetry with the help of a professional. "Utilise custom cabinetry to change the shape of the room. For example, a pantry could help to square off a weird nook, but internally, this weird space will provide additional storage."

Also keep in mind the power of colours and visual aesthetics. Courtney Cole, an interior designer at TileCloud, emphasises that continuity is critical when navigating compact layouts. "Opt for a light, neutral hue for paint to subtly balance any asymmetry within your walls and ceiling. Then enhance visual interest by incorporating various textures and shapes into your palette," Courtney advises.

"For odd-shaped kitchens and bathrooms, my approach leans towards embracing light and airy colour schemes," she says. "I prioritise texture and shape when selecting tiles and cabinetry, injecting visual interest into the space. After establishing this solid foundation, I enjoy infusing a touch of playfulness into the styling phase, adding personality and charm to the final design."

Gavin suggests getting creative with your flooring to offset the look of an oddly structured kitchen. "Blend the floor with the kitchen splashback. This way, the kitchen will look like it blends with the room. Often, the floor is already laid and that is a fixed point in the design. Then, focus on ergonomic design. If the room blends and the colour tones and textures are correct, you're onto a winner."



SHARP ANGLES

Sharp angles are easier to use than they first appear and, as Tina explains, something as simple as a shelf can turn this into a fully functional area. "When dealing with acute L-shaped wall edges, consider softening them with a simple shelf or plank between. This will transform the difficult corner into a functional zone ready for various uses, such as a comfortable reading nook or a stylish storage area."

Plus, kitchens with sharp angles are a popular trend for many modern contemporary homes as you can do plenty with them. Kellie says homeowners are getting clever with the angles, not just using them as overheads and benchtops underneath with cabinetry below.

"They are using these spaces for tea and coffee stations, breakfast nook cabinetry, small wall appliances such as inbuilt coffee machines, open shelving for cookbooks and decorative accessories. Sharp-angled kitchen designs are now the more functional areas in a home."



Above Tina Nettlefold, founder of homewares brand T.House. thouse.com.au **Top right** When dealing with small spaces, take a less-is-more approach by emphasising essential functionalities first. ausbuild.com.au **Below** Kellie Richardson, founder of Kurved By Design. kurvedbydesign.com **Opposite page** Sharp wall edge and corners can be used as a comfortable storage nook. beaumont-tiles.com.au

TIGHT SMALL SPACES

A less-is-more approach can balance style and functionality when it comes to compact spaces. However, Tina recommends planning your layout first before purchasing any appliances and fixtures, as essential design elements like form, colour and functionality will dictate what you should invest in to ensure your money is well spent.

“Choose your furniture wisely. Opting for fewer, larger pieces of furniture is key. Additionally, maximising vertical space by utilising the full height of the room enhances its spaciousness,” she explains. “Even employing colour schemes using tonal palettes will visually expand the area while maintaining cohesion. Lastly, illuminating the space effectively with ample lighting sources

further opens up and brightens the room, making it feel more expansive and inviting.”

To add to the less-is-more mindset, Michelle advocates installing features that can be used for multiple purposes. “For your kitchen flooring, you could install Hotwire under-floor heating underneath your tiles to keep your toes warm and for general heating in the home. This means you won’t have to install a heater elsewhere and keep the space toasty underneath your perfect tiling choices.”

And as Chelsea suggests, subtle touches like mirrored splashbacks and bright colour palettes can also create the illusion of a bigger space. “Anything that reflects light is going to help – think mirror splashbacks, light colours and polished benchtop finishes. Think about how you can maximise the natural light in the space. If there are no windows, is there potential for a skylight? Pared-back styling is also going to help; choose a few design features and really let them shine. You don’t want to clutter a small space with too much stuff.”

For bathrooms, vanities can be your saving grace for tight layouts, advises Kellie. “By using a small vanity or a vanity from the floor upwards, you will still have enough storage and more floor area,” she points out. “Look at the functionality in the space by installing a shower niche and a shaving cabinet above the vanity. This will give you more storage without being intrusive on the floor. When using tiles in smaller bathrooms, look at choosing a pattern on the floor tile only. By doing so, the floor area will look longer, more aesthetically pleasing on the eye, as well as tricking the eye to make the area look and feel bigger.”



LEAVE IT TO THE EXPERTS

While it’s tempting to tackle these space challenges yourself, the benefits of hiring a professional are undeniable; an expert opinion will ensure your kitchen and bathroom design succeeds.

“They will delve into the specifics such as kitchen dynamics, whether it be a bustling

family hub or rather a more solitary cooking space,” says Tina. “They will also help to determine the finer details used to dictate design choices based on personal lifestyles and daily practices: do you need a spice drawer? Shelves for cookbooks? Storage for easy-access oils and sauces? What is your family’s morning routine? Do you eat at your

kitchen bench or a table? Similarly, in the bathroom, they address factors like family size, usage patterns and desired amenities. By understanding these personal routines, designers can craft spaces that seamlessly blend functionality with aesthetics, ensuring homeowners get the most out of their investment.”