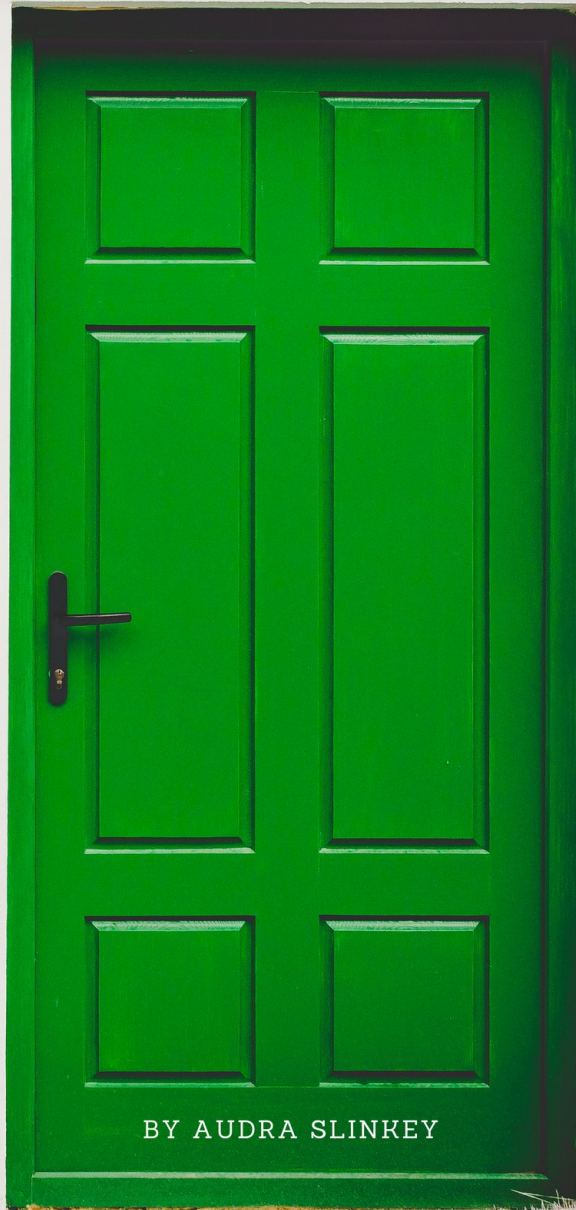




Home Staging Resource  
Solutions for Professional Home Stagers and Redesigners

THE SECRETS TO  
"GUIDING THE EYE"  
(EMPHASIS)



BY AUDRA SLINKEY

**Day Four –The Secrets to “Guiding the Eye” (Emphasis)**

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and it may be necessary from time to time to give a stupid or misinformed beholder a black eye.”  
*Miss Piggy*

Even though that quote has nothing to do with creating emphasis, I hope that it made you laugh. In any room of the house there should be one dramatic element that draws the eye’s attention. This is the focal point. **The focal point should easy to identify because it is usually associated with the prevailing purpose of the room.** After you have identified the focal point, ask yourself whether it is pleasing and positive to the eye. Thus, our first impression question is:

**Where did our eyes go first, and was that experience a positive one?**

If you’re lucky, the focal point is a beautiful architectural element such as a fireplace, bay window, grand staircase or built-in cabinet. If a room does not have one, no problem; it’s easy to create one! In this module I’ll give you my best advice on exactly where and how to create a focal point in each room of the home. I may be simplifying, but I think you’ll find that it works every time!

**Here are a few things to remember when creating or sprucing up a focal point:**

- **Go Purpose** – Unsure what to use or where? Consider the purpose of the room and choose that main piece, i.e. a bed in a bedroom, desk in an office, sink in a bathroom.
- **Go Big** – Remember we want it to be the first thing people notice when walking into the room
- **Go Bold** – Use commanding colors to draw the eye.
- **Go Vertical** – Tall pieces command our attention
- **Emphasize the focal point by facing furniture towards it, much as an audience might face an entertainer.**



**Hands On:** Okay, pop quiz! Before you skip ahead, see if you can tell me what usually should be the primary focal point in each room, especially considering the what I’ve already stated:

|               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| Entry _____   | Living _____  |
| Dining _____  | Kitchen _____ |
| Bedroom _____ | Bath _____    |

## The Entry Area or Lack Thereof

---

When one enters into a home, a transition is expected--no matter how small--from the entry to the living areas. In homes where you literally walk straight into the living area, creating an *entry*, much less a *focal point* for the entry is a difficult task. Use the wall adjoining the front door to create a small entrance focal point: set a bedside or console table up with a mirror or picture and some chosen accessories.



In this home, the grand double door entrance was stark and empty



The mirror which was seemingly permanently affixed to the wall was "worked around" as I created a simple entry using what the owners had in about ten minutes.

Sometimes entrances need more than just a simple set up. If you have a narrow, low ceilinged entrance remember our Problem Area Rules Above and cosmetically fix the area if you can ahead of time:



This entrance breaks all the rules!



The difference paint can make! An inexpensive Target table creates a focal point that is not so wide that it blocks the area.

If the space allows, add a bench or other seating, like extra chairs from a formal dining room, in order to convey a sense of space.

## The Living Area

---

If there is a fireplace in a living room, it is the clear focal point every time whether you like it or not. In the following examples, you'll see how to emphasize a great fireplace or to deemphasize an unattractive one.

This formal living room has a perfect and comfortable living area. That fantastic fireplace is emphasized by arranging furniture pieces on either side of the fireplace, facing each other.>>



<<In contrast to the example above, this room's fireplace is less than attractive. While we cannot remove this unsightly architectural feature, we certainly can distract from it, using the largest and brightest picture the owner has on hand.

In both examples below where there is not a fireplace, it's easy to create a focal point with your well-dressed couch and chosen artwork. The three pieces of art in the picture on the right are particularly creatively arranged as a focal point.



## The Dining Area

---

The obvious focal point in the dining room should be the dining table. It's where people go to sit and be entertained, so naturally it's also the first place they look when entering the dining room. If you're able, set the dining table so it's always ready for entertaining, and make sure that the centerpiece is worthy and *to scale* with the table and its settings!



## The Kitchen Area

---

This may surprise you, but I believe the focal point of a kitchen should always be the island if there is one. If there isn't, it should be the hood (if it is worthy). Lacking those, focus on the sink area. Why? Because these are usually the places that people notice first in a kitchen. Take a look at these photos and see...



Islands become the clear winner despite a gorgeous hood.



With no island or hood, the eye generally follows to the source of light from a kitchen window as in this galley kitchen.

## The Bedroom Area

---

Ah, the bedroom. The scene of rest and relaxation! Where do we spend most of our time in a bedroom? On a bed naturally, so naturally the bed should always be our focal point in a bedroom EVEN if there is a fireplace. Why? Because we look to our beds when we enter a bedroom. Here are some fantastic examples of true focal points in a bedroom...



Notice some common denominators of a well dressed bed as a focal point? Here's a few...

- Layers of pillows
- A layer of pattern but primarily a calm white/neutral spread
- Vertical height above the beds in the form of pictures or photos
- A touch of texture in the form of a fur or chenille throw/pillows which serve to intensify the luxurious mood of a bedroom

You can emphasize the bed in a bedroom by having a chair in the corner facing it much like our living arrangement.

## The Bath Area

---

The focal point in a small bathroom with no bath is the sink area. In a bigger bathroom it can be either the tub, if it is in a place of emphasis, OR the sink area as in the example below:



**BEFORE** – This mirror bounced the energy out of the room and left us no place to rest our eyes.



**AFTER** – This vertical piece is the well-deserved created focal point

In small baths, it doesn't take much to draw the eye and give it a place to rest. In fact, don't neglect to do this simple action.



**BEFORE** – I'm sure the agent just told them to "clear the space" which consequently cleared the focal point.



**AFTER** – A sweet and unassuming focal point is created simply, using a few things the owners had and an inexpensive mirror purchased at Lowe's.

## The Office Area

---

The focal point in an office is always the desk, so place it so that it faces the room's entrance if you can. Remember, the purpose of the room usually dictates the focal point as well...



## Finding Focal Points Recap

---

Many of you may have disagreed with me on this subject and I have read many different and competing theories about where the focal point should be in a room. Follow your intuition and find the purpose of the room, which usually is where you'll find the focal point as well. We'll talk more about this in Week Two as we look room-by-room.



**Hands On:** Take a look at each room of your home with fresh eyes. What is the dominating feature or focal point in each room? Does it follow the guidelines I've given above? Could your focal points use some easy sprucing up? Take the time to creatively consider how you can do this on the fly, much like you would with a client.



**Danger:** Watch for competing focal points in a room. The most common are a large TV and a fireplace in a family room. Both have strong purpose and command our attention, so try to place them next to each other OR over each other.

Make the focal point clear. If there must be two, set them visually next to each other if you can.