

# vern knows side tables

HGTV Design Star judge  
**Vern Yip** shares his top tips for  
choosing the right piece.



A handy little  
bottom shelf.

Renard 27½"-H x  
19½"-diameter  
table, \$179,  
ballarddesigns.com



**j**ust about any table that, well, sits to the side of a piece of furniture can be considered a side table. You'll most often find one in a living room, by a sofa or chair. But depending on its height, you can also use one as a nightstand or as a coffee table in a small room. And because they aren't big anchor pieces, side tables are a great place to add color or texture. Here are some pointers for finding one (or two or three) for your space.

**1. One height doesn't fit all.** If you're using it with a chair or sofa, a side table works best when it's no lower than an inch or two below the arm of the seat it's next to. A standard sofa arm is around 24 inches tall, so aim for a table about that height. If you're pairing a side table with a chair that has a shorter arm than a sofa, or if you want to use the table as a stool, pick one that's shorter—more like 16 to 20 inches. If it's going to serve as an entryway piece, choose one that's 27 to 30 inches tall.

**2. Side table widths and diameters vary a lot too,** from 10 inches (or

sometimes even less) and up, but I like a surface width that's at least 18 inches across. Anything smaller isn't quite as functional. If you're putting a standard-size lamp on the table, you'll need one that's at least 22 inches in diameter.

**3. For a living room with a lot of upholstered pieces,** I like side tables that are sleek and simple. The table's clean lines balance out the other furniture's softness. Some smart choices: glass, acrylic, metal, and wood without much carving. If your furniture is modern, you can go with something more ornate.



Journey Trading Co. Houston  
18"-H x 16"-diameter table,  
\$480, allmodern.com



Arland 26"W x 26"D x  
24"H table, \$299,  
broyhillfurniture.com for stores



Adams 23"-H x 18"-diameter  
table, \$349, roomandboard.com



Martini 16½"-H x 15"-diameter  
table, \$149, westelm.com



Tini II 8"W x 18"D x 20"H  
table in fireworks and zig zag,  
\$485, oomphonline.com



Martini 25"-H x 20"-diameter  
spool table, \$439,  
hgtvhomefurniture.com for stores



Smart 17¼"W x 17¼"D x  
19"H table, \$149, cb2.com



Elisha 24"-H x  
15½"-diameter table,  
\$229, ethanallen.com

**4. Think about the surface.** Ceramic, stone, and glass tops are good for holding drinks since you don't need coasters. Wood- or fabric-top tables are fine for displaying knickknacks or resting books and remotes on.

**5. Round and oval tables are pretty much no-fail.** They add another shape to a room that typically has a lot of rectangular pieces, like a sofa, coffee table, and chairs.

**6. Side tables can control clutter!** If you need extra storage space, choose

one with an open shelf on the bottom to hold books or games, or one with a combination of shelves and doors to hide your DVDs or electronics.

**7. The number of side tables you need in a room** depends on the amount of seating you have and the room's size. Any sofa or chair can have its own side table, or two seats can share one. Let's say you have a sofa with two chairs facing it plus a coffee table. I would put one side table between the two chairs and two other side tables on either end of the sofa, if the room is big enough.

**8. Since side tables aren't the center of attention,** you can be more daring with them than with big furniture. I love tables in bright colors, or ones with curvy legs. One thing I'd avoid is an elaborate side table next to a sofa with a bold pattern.

**9. One pair of identical side tables in a room is fine,** but if you have more than two tables, don't match the rest. Do stick with a similar look, though: Maybe all the tables are made of warm wood, like oak and walnut, or they could all have brushed nickel or bronze accents. Having one trait in common will keep the look cohesive.