



OPEN PLAN... OR BROKEN PLAN?

Open-plan living has been one of the biggest trends in home design for many years now, the idea being that knocking down walls or designing houses with limited separate rooms and having one large living space creates a sense of light, space and fluidity that increases the sociability of your home; but it's not a concept that everyone embraces. I live in an open plan house where the kitchen, living room and dining room are open to each other, and this has been a welcome change from my previous house, where I never knew which room my children were in – or what they were getting up to! I also used to feel rather sorry for myself tucked away in the kitchen preparing supper when everyone else was chatting and drinking in the living room. Luckily I am a very tidy person by nature, so as soon as there is a pile of ironing or homework cluttering up my kitchen island or dining table, these get whisked away out of sight and ceremoniously thrown into a bedroom where I can then shut the door!

Open-plan layouts can reduce privacy, but also create an environment where the family can sit, relax, play, cook and chat together. So what is the compromise? Broken-plan living means keeping the things you love about open-plan design whilst introducing an element of quiet space for a more specific use. The overall area can be divided cleverly and still make the most of the welcome sense of space and light, but also creates a place to escape to when it all gets too much! Introducing different levels is another clever way of breaking up the space, and creating different ceiling heights which can add to the design style of your home, as well as introducing subtle zones for particular functions – a study or 'snug' for example, somewhere to sit and read the papers or concentrate on exam revision.

Here at Arcadia Home Interiors we have a number of innovative ideas for broken living with a range of brilliantly designed

kitchen arrangements by German manufacturer, SieMatic, which are freestanding and can be moved to different areas – or indeed to your next home if you move house. Mid-width 'shelving' walls break up an area well and can be adorned with framed photographs, plants, your favourite ceramics, glasses, jugs and vases for example, adding decorative interest, textures and colours. A bespoke fireplace or wood burner in the middle of a large room is an inventive way of creating a cosy ambience. This design by Stuv is a remote controlled, double sided gas fire that creates a wonderfully atmospheric, transparent feature between two spaces; or this magnificent floor to ceiling Focus wood burner makes an eye-catching and heart-warming focal point. So to reiterate, broken living employs structural elements such as half walls, assorted floor levels, glass walls, mezzanines or dividing shelves to delineate and formalise areas for different uses.

The only thing I don't like about my open plan kitchen is that I have to be more crafty when it comes to pretending I have cooked things that I have in fact purchased from the local delicatessen. I hasten to add that I never actively lie about having cooked something when I haven't, but I have been known to go to great lengths to hide all incriminating packaging, decant the delicious beef goulash into my own dishes and then scatter a bit of flour around the place to give the kitchen an air of culinary expertise rather than 'heating up' expertise... When complimented with "This is delicious!" I simply reply "Thank you!" (not lying). "Did it take you long to cook?" I simply reply "No" (true). It's when I get asked for the recipe or what that particular herb is that gives the dish that certain piquancy that I begin to squirm!

Like every aspect of interior design, there are no rules and there is no right or wrong. Your home is your sanctuary and should always be a comforting place to be, so don't ever feel pressured to follow a certain style. In the same way as wearing clothes that feel good and not worrying about what the magazines say is 'the latest fashion' just be true to yourself and surround yourself with things that make you happy. Simply really.



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