

Furnishing Your First Home As A Couple...in Style! Experts Offer Tips On Getting Started

(NAPS)—Newlyweds are getting a head start on their new lives together by furnishing their first homes early. Some 28 percent of married couples say they bought their first piece of furniture together before they even stepped over the threshold, and another 32 percent bought furniture within the first six months of marriage, according to a new survey conducted by the American Furniture Manufacturers Association (AFMA).

Interior designer Catherine Bailly Dunne, A.S.I.D., author of *Interior Designing for All Five Senses*, offers some practical advice for couples to ensure that the process of shopping for furniture together is easy and fun.

Dunne suggests crafting a master plan based on your dreams and demands. "Every couple has a list of furnishings they *need* and a longer list of pieces they *want*. Start in the room that needs the most furniture or where you spend the most time, and build from there," she advises.

Next, learn what kinds of furniture you both like. She advises looking through decorating books and visiting local retailers to see what's available.

Dunne also emphasizes the power of accessories. Items such as lamps, picture frames, vases and area rugs are simple ways to add detail and style to a room, notes Dunne. And, because most honeymooners' homes are filled with wedding gifts, she points out that pieces such as bookshelves, curio cabinets and coffee tables are perfect for displaying new treasures.

While most newlyweds usually don't furnish their new home all at once, Dunne says they shouldn't underestimate what they *can* do.

"I recommend that couples select furniture and accessories they both love, keeping in mind their furnishings will eventually



be replaced as their family needs and style preferences change," said Dunne.

Married couples acknowledge that Dunne's advice is invaluable when starting out. In fact, 45 percent of couples surveyed say they wish they had a better understanding of their own taste and style before they began furnishing their home. And 44 percent of couples wanted more information about the varieties of furniture styles available.

Indeed, furniture manufacturers today are creating a wide array of furniture styles that appeal to both bride and groom. "The industry is responding to the needs of consumers with home furnishings that are both stylish and comfortable," says AFMA Vice President Jackie Hirschhaut.

The AFMA survey found that 67 percent of the newly married make their furniture decisions together. And, says Dunne, in furniture shopping—like relationships—togetherness is the key to success.

"This is one of the first opportunities newlyweds have to express who they are as a couple," said Dunne. They should discuss the styles they prefer and what would be the best additions to their new life together.

"And, above all," she adds, "they should have fun designing a home that reflects their personality as a couple."