

When choosing a dog bed, first ask your dog

OK, so maybe the new dog beds were more for me than for Peapod and Pippin, but I thought I was doing us all a favor. Their old beds — two worn, janky, mismatched, bio-hazards that were a general disgrace to the master bedroom — needed to go.

So when I stumbled across the pretty Laura Ashley pillow-style dog beds on clearance, which I know means no turning back, I bought two. The fabric, a pale blue and cream French print cotton blend, would go beautifully in our bedroom. I loaded the 36-inch-by-24-inch puffy, poly-filled beds in my car and raced home eager to experience the instant upgrade.

As home accessories go, dog beds are sizable items, yet they are often a room's weak spot. Most are as ugly as Halloween. This is partly because the industry has been making dog beds out of recycled men's leisure suits from the '70s.

D.C. takes one look at the new beds and shakes his head. "They're not going to like those."

"Why not?" I ask.

"Peapod likes a bolster to lean against and Pippin likes to nest."

"Since when did you become



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the Dog Whisperer?"

I parade the new beds ceremoniously into the bedroom. I pick up the two, skanky, disgusting old beds and squire them out.

"Slow down," D.C. says, and takes the old eyesores off my hands. Meanwhile, at the sight of their beloved beds being air-lifted, Peapod, our rat terrier mix, knits a worrisome knot in her brow. Pippin, the miniature Labradoodle, unleashes a concerned whine. D.C. lays the old beds next to the new ones. "Let them choose."

To their credit, both dogs give the new beds a try. After about 15 seconds, Peapod shoots me a withering look,



Stuff of dog dreams — Because dog beds are conspicuous home accessories, spend time shopping for something your pet loves, that goes with your décor, too. Damedeeso for Dreamstime.com

turns tail and goes back to her old bed. Pippin, the pleaser, tries twice. Both times he crawls up, lays down and tumbles off.

"BZZRRT!" D.C. makes the sound of a disqualifying game-show buzzer and jerks his thumb backward.

"But they look so much better," I say. Four brown eyes look at me as if I just ran off with their cookie jar. It was bad enough when I learned D.C. had opinions about home design, but now the dogs have opinions, too?

"They like their old beds,"

says D.C., their lawyer.

"Well, I'm not going to let my house go to the dogs."

As D.C. and I debate form vs. function, the dogs' heads swing back and forth as if they're watching a tennis match.

For the next two weeks, all four beds stay in the bedroom. And, despite how nice the new ones looked, they got a unanimous tails-down verdict.

To find out how to get dog beds right, I visit several websites devoted to this, which proves I am not the only one who overthinks small matters. Then I call Dr. Ian Dunbar, a veterinarian, animal behaviorist and author of several books on dogs. He also, and this is key, has a beautiful home. (I've seen pictures.)

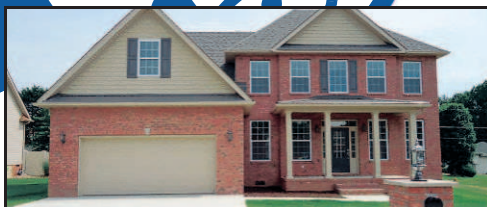
Though he personally doesn't like a lot of dog beds lying around, because "they're ugly, tacky, trip hazards," (Exactly!) he does have a few. He offered these guidelines to help you pick a bed your dog will love that looks good, too:

Ask your dog

"Dogs have preferences," said Dunbar. "Some breeds don't like dog beds at all." The

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