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*The*  
**ENGLISH HOME**  
*Celebrating the essence of English style*



joinery is both practical and beautiful," she says.

Remember, too, that your needs may change with time, and that some flexibility will be worth an extra initial outlay in order to be able to reconfigure pieces when necessary. A piece designed as a wardrobe can be easily transformed into a desk and storage area with the addition of a pull out shelf for a computer keyboard, for example.

**MATERIAL ISSUES**

Wood is the most commonly used material for built-in wardrobes and cupboards but you should take care to match the type of wood with your room schemes and the period of your home.

MDF (medium density fibreboard) or particle board is widely used and made from a highly compressed mixture of wood and other fibres. As a composite, it is more cost effective than solid timbers such as oak, but it is also strong and will not shrink or warp. It also provides the smoothest surface for a painted finish.

"It is a high-tech product. It is easy to machine for assembly and is more akin to cutting metal. There is no wood grain, so it is perfect to paint," explains James



Mayor, who designs and installs fitted furniture in MDF. A single wardrobe for a child's bedroom starts from £800, excluding fitting.

If you prefer to see the wood grain, real wood veneers combine aesthetics with durability. "We might use a veneered walnut or oak for a large wardrobe door or for a desk surface. It looks beautiful but unlike solid wood it is more practical and cost effective and will not warp," says Lissa Lalor of specialist fitted furniture company Neville Johnson. The company also offers alternative finishes such as high gloss, glass or painted. You should expect to pay between £4,000 and £7,000 for a fitted study or run of wardrobes.

**THE DESIGN TEAM**

If you are commissioning a small piece of storage, a local, reputable joiner should fulfil your requirements. For larger-scale designs, such as a fitted bedroom or architectural joinery, consider employing an interior designer who can work with a joinery company to realise your dream. It is worth remembering that kitchen companies such as Plain English or Tim Wood will also take on specialist cabinetry commissions. For complex projects, top-end companies like Smallbone of Devizes, Clive Christian or Symm can mastermind an entire scheme using experienced in-house interior designers and joiners. ▶

**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT** If you have a utility room or dedicated 'boot room' then organised storage is invaluable for keeping the space neat and tidy. From £25,000, Plain English. This fitted piece in a children's playroom is full of height adjustable shelves to house toys and games. Hand painted in green. From £2,500, James Mayor Furniture. Create a home office with a bespoke desk and wall mounted storage to house filing cabinets and hidden cables. Lime wood doors and oak work surface, from £6,000. Barnes of Ashburton.

Buyer's Guide

**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT** The shelves and cabinetry on either side of this fireplace are in lined oak and altered from an existing library, from £12,000, Turner Pocock.

Bespoke timber bookcases can provide practical storage solutions and also create an interesting focal point for the room; commissioned by Yangou Architects and handcrafted by Elliott & Co. In this master bedroom, a television is cleverly concealed behind classic English cabinetry painted in a durable satin lacquer. Wardrobes, cupboards and shelves are on either side. Kingston collection, from £2,000, Options.

Do not forget to factor in lead times if you are planning to commission made-to-measure fitted furniture. Most companies suggest around four to six weeks, but this will vary depending on the complexity of the furniture.

**THE FINER DETAILS**

In addition to attending to details like ironmongery, silk-lined wardrobe doors and special finishes to the exterior, most fitted furniture companies can advise on the range of floor-to-ceiling cupboard door options, which are as important as the storage space itself.

An architectural jib door is traditionally used for discreet entrances in panelled rooms such as libraries where breaks in architraves and skirting might be kept to a minimum. They are hung on either a pivot or soft hinge – not unlike those in kitchen cupboards.

"Jib doors are usually cut to make the joints as fine as possible so no daylight shines through," explains Dominic Benoist, construction director at Symm. In libraries, dummy books can be bought by the metre and lighting installed, in order to conceal entrances, but jib doors are also ideal if you wish to apply wall paper or a trompe l'oeil.

Pull out doors, too, are good for discreet storage – drinks cabinets, for example – and may carry concealed or pop out handles. Doors can also be motorised and controlled remotely.

Pivot doors, which can also be jib doors, operate on small posts attached to the floor and ceiling. You should, however, consider the space the circular motion of the door will require if it is to open fully, although it is possible to install shelving on the interior of the door, to make up for lost room.

For the space-conscious, sliding and multi-fold doors may be a solution. For ease of movement and to look good, what Dominic terms a 'space pocket' or recess is necessary for sliding doors.

Without it you will continually be sliding doors from one side to another to gain full access to the facility behind it. Vertical sliding doors are restricted by the weight of the door itself. Multi-fold doors, commonly seen in garden rooms adjoining open-plan living spaces, stack up much like a concertina, with each hinge or knuckle locking into place.

Most expensive of all options are curved doors, which require considerable time and expertise to be installed correctly. Made of wood, sheet metal or even glass, they are invariably moulded using a vacuum system called a bag press, and are ideal for shaped areas. ■