COOL, CALM & COLLECTED

*Is your bedroom a nightmare? A place where you dump your clutter, catch up on your emails late into the night and where you spend the wee small hours restlessly punching your pillow? Bath interior designer **Clair Strong** shows us how to create a healthy bedroom for a better night's sleep*

We all understand the importance of sleep. And yet so many of us struggle to get a solid seven or eight hours.

For many people, the problem of poor sleep is quite simple: their bedroom is not the sanctuary of peace and quiet it should be. Clutter, noise, stimulation from digital devices and uncomfortable beds can all have a serious impact on sleep quality. Fortunately, this is an easy fix. Here are my tips for creating a healthy, sleep-inducing bedroom without sacrificing style.

CALMING COLOURS

That bright pink accent wall might look fabulous, but it could also be keeping you awake. Intense colours create visual energy, making you feel stimulated, inspired or motivated. That's great in the office or the gym, but less useful in the bedroom. Colour is intrinsically linked with mood and emotions, so choose calming colours like light blues, greys and greens for a relaxing, restful space. For inspiration: colourtrend.ie

CURTAIN CALL

The human body is designed to sleep when it is dark, so the more light you can remove from your bedroom, the better. Any form of light (including light from a phone screen) inhibits the production of melatonin, a hormone that induces drowsiness. Less melatonin means less sleep.

Inside the home we can simply turn all the lights off. But what about the outside sources we have no control over? Blackout curtains are a fantastic solution, blocking up to 99% of all light, including street lamps and sunlight. If you already have a pair of curtains you love, consider getting them relined with blackout lining to create the same effect.

REDUCE CLUTTER

Your bedroom is not the place for clutter. If there's only one room in your house you keep impeccably tidy, make it the bedroom. Remove anything and everything you do not need. That means the piles of laundry, stacks of old magazines and boxes of clothes you will finally get round to donating. Clutter can be stressful and distracting which is exactly what we're trying to avoid in the bedroom.

Removing clutter will also have the added benefit of keeping the bedroom free from dust and bacteria.

INDULGE IN A LITTLE LUXURY

We spend a third of our lives asleep (or at least trying to sleep) and even more time than that in our bedrooms. Why not make the most of it?

Indulging in a little luxury may even help you sleep better. Particularly if you focus on the things you use most frequently, like pillows and bed linens. We sleep better when we're comfortable, so if that means spending a little more money, it's well worth the investment.

Scent is another little luxury that might help you sleep better. Essential oils like jasmine and lavender are well-known to have a calming effect on the body. Transform your bedroom into a spa-like haven with diffusers or room sprays.

MATTRESS MATTERS

Like most things, mattresses experience lots of wear and tear with use. Unlike most things, this wear and tear isn't always visible. According to *Which?* a good quality mattress will last between eight and 10 years. After that time, it's simply not providing you with the support and comfort you need. If you wake up feeling stiff and achy, or still feel tired after a full night's sleep, it might be time to replace your mattress.

DITCH THE DIGITAL DEVICES

We're all guilty of taking our phones and iPads to bed to watch a film, browse the internet, email friends . . . However, numerous studies have shown that watching
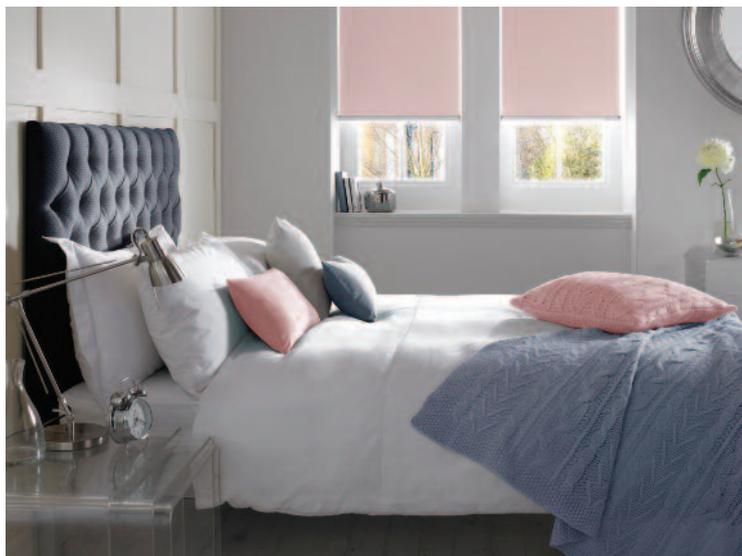
CREATE A BEAUTIFUL SPACE: left to right, Rose roller blind by Style Studio and bedroom furniture by Team 7 Nox by Wharfside

TV or using your phone before bed can lead to sleep deprivation. Don't spend time and money on creating a beautiful space only to keep up destructive habits. For a better night's sleep ensure TVs, phones and tablets are kept out of the bedroom.

THE SLEEP COUNCIL ADVISES
The British Sleep Council recommends that we keep our bedrooms at around 16 – 18C (that's 60 – 65F) – too hot or too cold and it may disturb your slumbers. If you've had a hectic day and find it difficult to unwind, try creating a calming ritual to induce sleep. Have a warm bath, listen to some quiet, soothing music or do some yoga – these all help to relax the mind and the body. Once in bed try deep, slow breathing and encourage yourself to count your blessings and focus on the positive factors in your life.

Eating dinner late may be another factor in making getting to sleep harder. The best foods for sleep include milk, cherries, chicken and rice. The worst offenders are fatty meat, curry and alcohol. Some people try to eat their last meal of the day by 6pm, giving their bodies time to digest their food before bedtime – but this may not be practical for many working people. Find more tips at: sleepcouncil.org.uk. ◼