

Creating an Outdoor Room

A Step-by-Step Guide

Whether you are hiring a landscape designer or designing your outdoor space yourself, use this comprehensive guide to help you create the perfect outdoor room.

- Step 1: Determine the purpose of the space.**
 - Will the space be for relaxing, playing, dining, cooking, or a mix of these?
 - How many people will the space need to accommodate?

- Step 2: Walk your property.**
 - How much space do you have and what is the layout like?
 - What would you like to keep and what you like to change?

- Step 3: Start a wish list.**
 - Collect ideas from the internet and magazines.
 - Build a file of designs, products and ideas that you like.
 - Keep the style of your home in mind to ensure that your outdoor space will accentuate your indoor spaces.

- Step 4: Go window shopping.**
 - Visit a retail showroom for outdoor products and do some browsing.
 - Locate a retailer using the online tool from the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (www.hpba.org).
 - Go online and look up the products you are considering. Read manufacturer information and customer reviews.

- Step 5: Think from the ground up.**
 - Decide on the best decorative concrete finish for your patio. Visit the ConcreteNetwork.com photo gallery to see examples of how color and texture can be incorporated into concrete.
 - Make sure patio size is large enough to accommodate desired dining and seating areas.

- Step 6: Make a plan.**
 - Sketch out your vision.
 - Position a fire feature as the focal point of your outdoor space.
 - Locate cooking and eating areas for optimum function and comfort.
 - Divide the space into multiple areas, giving the feel of separate rooms.

- Step 7: Find a professional contractor.**

- Visit ConcreteNetwork.com to find a local contractor that can install your decorative concrete patio of your choice.
- Run conduit for electrical, gas, and water prior to pouring concrete (Steps 9 and 10 will be much easier if you've planned ahead).

Step 8: Add patio furniture.

- Incorporate a dining or conversation set into your space to create an inviting and comfortable atmosphere.

Step 9: Accentuate with landscaping.

- Consult your local nursery or a professional landscape designer for help with selecting and placing the perfect plants to complement your outdoor room design.

Step 10: Add the final details.

- Add the finishing touches to your outdoor living space.
- Consider lighting to enhance pathways, water features and electronics.
- Don't forget to decorate—hang art work on the walls, add throw pillows and a colorful umbrella—it's the final touches that complete an outdoor room.

A Word of Advice

Don't be overwhelmed by all there is to do. Take your outdoor living project one chunk at a time. You can even space the work out over a few years. After you have a plan, we suggest beginning with the hardscape (Steps 5-7), then adding furniture (Step 8), next landscaping (Step 9), and finally, finish off your space with accessories (Step 10).

This list was compiled using the *How to Create an Outdoor Room Factsheet* from the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (www.hpba.org).