

# Black and white done right

Whether country or contemporary, traditional or transitional, black and white is a classic color scheme for kitchens and baths. But why do some of these rooms look polished and elegant while others appear bland and uninspired? With over twenty years of experience designing elegant kitchens and baths, Jason Urrutia of Urrutia Design shares his tips on how to move a black-and-white color scheme idling in neutral into high gear.

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administrative assistant



## HERE'S HOW ...

### ... this kitchen was shifted into high gear

- The black countertops and French-door frame add pop.
- The art on the wall, the fruits and vegetables on the counter, and the tray of spirits and liqueurs bring a little color into the room.
- The reflective surfaces of the appliances, the range hood, the toaster, and the cabinet pulls, plus the glass in the window, the French door, and the upper cabinets add light and life to the room.
- The glass canisters filled with rice and pasta bring more earth tones to the space.
- Hard surfaces such as wood floors, cabinetry, countertops, and tile are softened by cushions on the chairs, the fabric on the overhead light shade, and the runner on the floor.



**Layers make the difference.** To make sure that a space will be enjoyed for a long time, Urrutia starts with a classic design, then applies subtle twists to bring the space forward and give it a polished, elegant look. Once the base of white or off-white walls and cabinetry has been set, layering begins. Urrutia believes that a pop of black is essential to offset the neutrals from becoming too sleepy. He might introduce another color—but not too much. He says that calm and serene is the way to go. To bring movement and more light into a room, he adds items with reflective surfaces into his design. Mixing a variety of textures and materials is also key.



**Elegant and affordable.**

*While an unlimited budget is nice, Urrutia says that it is not required to achieve an elegant design. Bigger isn't always better, and expensive and excessive is almost always unnecessary. A good designer enjoys the creative challenge of pulling together a special space while working within the confines of a strict budget.*





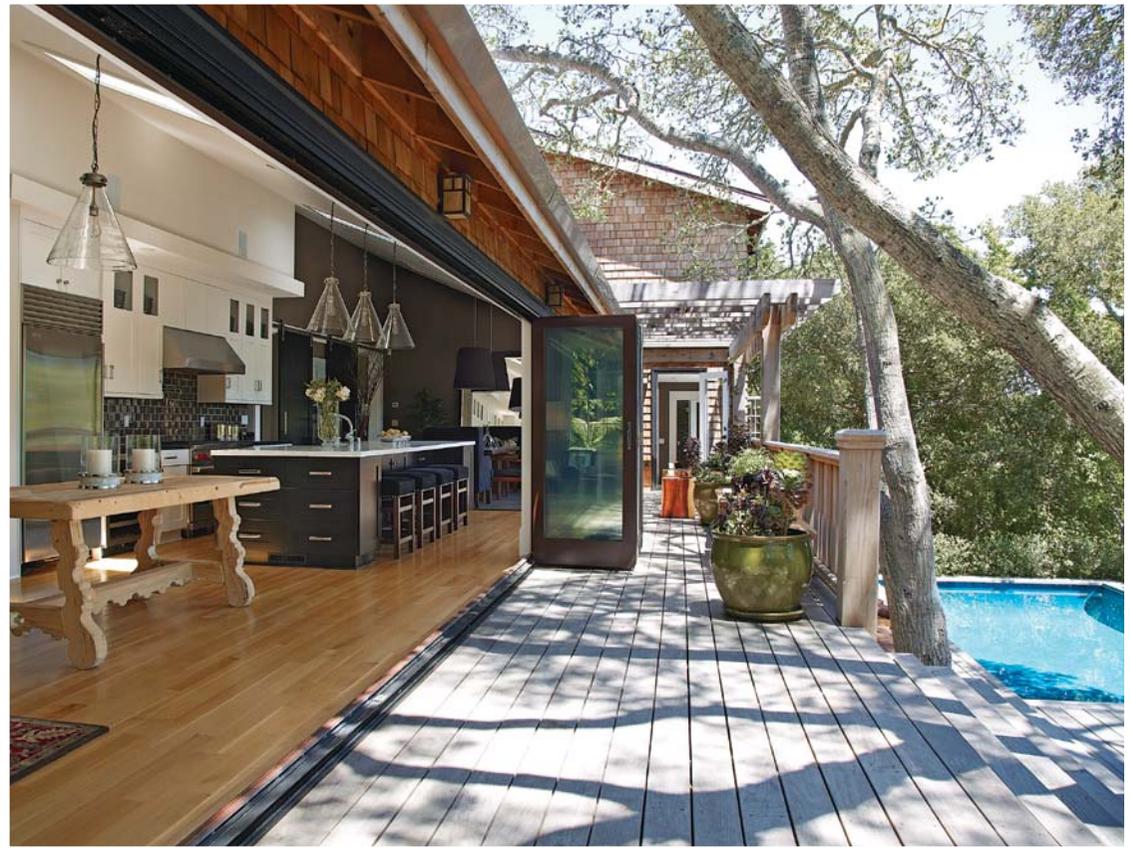
## HERE'S HOW ...

### ... this bath goes from all white to so right

- The accent tile on the floor and the tub-side table add a touch of black.
- Subtle color is incorporated with a bright bath sponge, a woven-wood window shade, brown frames around the windows and the picture on the wall, and an elegant display of perfume bottles.
- The reflective surfaces of the windows, mirror, glass shower door, cabinetry pulls, and chrome faucets make this bath bright and inviting.
- Fluffy towels, a fabric-covered light sconce, and the woven-wood window shade soften the hard surfaces of the floors, walls, countertop, and cabinetry.







**Be sure to consider this.** The more sun, sky, clouds, trees, and views invited into an interior, the better. Urrutia relies on shades of brown in items such as painted surfaces, platters, and bowls for the earth tones needed to balance the interior and exterior spaces. If there is a visual or physical connection to an adjacent room, he adds a touch of whatever color the next room is based upon into the kitchen or bath and adds whites, blacks, grays, and earth tones into the adjacent room.

## HERE'S HOW ... ... this kitchen connects to the adjoining spaces

- The walls of glass in the kitchen and the dining area invite in the sun and views to the outside.
- The brown dining-area walls and kitchen backsplash bring earth tones inside.
- Black is used on the kitchen-island cabinetry, the frames of the doors leading to the outside, the sliding barn doors, the barstools and dining chairs, and the frame around the mirror, tying together the color schemes of both the kitchen and the dining area.
- Flowers in a vase and potted plants in the dining area add a little color and bring more of the outdoors inside.

**DESIGNS** Jason Urrutia and Martha Carvalho, Urrutia Design, Sausalito, Calif.; [urrutiadesign.com](http://urrutiadesign.com)

**PHOTOGRAPHS** Matt Sartain Photography, courtesy of Urrutia Design