

Co-ordinated flat

'I've created a mindful home with soft neutrals'

Aziza Quadir's uncluttered, minimalist scheme is good for soothing the soul – and takes the stress out of a working-from-home environment

Calm aesthetic lover Aziza Quadir became interested in homes and interiors through YouTube videos and Instagram influencers. 'I was still living with my parents at the time and decided to change-up my bedroom, which had previously been my brother's dingy room,' she recalls. 'I saved money from my weekend job and brought in airy curtains and white furniture. The clean, soothing scheme made me feel much happier, and became the start of my signature look.'

Fast-forward a few years, and Aziza and her husband Hadeeb moved into a furnished rental flat when they first got married. Quickly, though, she became frustrated with its limitations. 'I tried my best to make it my own, but really I wanted to have furniture that was more me,' she explains. 'When my husband needed to move for work, we went looking for a three-bedroom flat with a walk-in wardrobe and an open-plan layout.'

► Aziza has transformed her first floor flat in this cosy red brick building in Reading into an oasis of calm neutrals, brimming with tactile boho details



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ON REFLECTION

Placing a large mirror opposite the door bounces light to make the room feel bigger. It also marks the transition between the living and dining areas



◀ A coffee table in transparent glass with a fine gold frame means the large size doesn't crowd the room. 'I chose a circular shape for softness next to the square edges of the sofa, rug and TV cabinet opposite,' says Aziza

▼ Freestanding ladder shelves from B&M are a renter's must-have for adding height for adding interest to blank walls. 'They're a great hack as they don't need invasive fixings,' says Aziza. 'I can easily move them around and take them with me'

LIVING ROOM

Aziza needed a sofa as soon as they moved in and found Habitat's Reagan sofa bed from Argos could be delivered in a week. Her cushions are a mix of Primark and H&M. IKEA's Silverlonn curtains were a bargain at £15 – they're made with a lightweight fabric, which tricks the eye to heighten the space

OUR MUST HAVES White background canvas print, from £31, Photowall. Kleca side table, £20, B&Q. Large gold framed leaner mirror, £152.95, Melody Maison



◀ Introducing tactile texture like Aziza has is an easy way to add movement and dimension to an understated scheme in a calm neutral colour palette



COME ON IN...

WE ARE Aziza Quadir (@homewithaziza on Instagram), 25, who works in cyber security, her husband, Hadeeb Ahmed, 25, who's an IT consultant and Mika the cat.

OUR HOME IS a first floor two-bedroom flat in Reading, Berkshire. We moved here in January 2022.

MY BEST BARGAIN I find all sorts at car boot sales and charity shops – they are great for unusual vases, crockery and cutlery at rock bottom prices.

SHOPS I LOVE Primark has an amazing homewares section with affordable alternatives to other brands. The quality of H&M products is worth paying that little bit more for. Buying 'blind' on Amazon is usually risk-free as it has a really good returns policy.

MY TOP TIP Mixing paint with bicarbonate of soda is a good trick to create a ceramic-like finish on a vase or pot. It thickens the liquid and produces a textured look that I love.

MY STYLE IS I love a palette of warm whites, beiges and light woods. The key is to vary tones and textures and use tactile fabrics in a mix of patterns.

NEXT TO DO I've experimented with a khaki tassel cushion on my bed. The dark green has surprised me so I'm going to add more of this colour to my home.



DIY THE LOOK

Aziza recreated the boho bead trend by making her own with white wood beads and tasselled string from eBay for her sideboard



STARTING FRESH

However, in a competitive market and with time running out on their contract, the couple had to downscale their requirements. 'Rental flats were being snapped up so quickly, or were too expensive, so I made the decision to take this one without even seeing it,' Aziza recalls. 'I was confident the basics were fine – clean neutral walls, cream carpet and the layout looked OK.'

The couple didn't see the property until they'd signed the contract – and there were a few surprises in store. 'The kitchen and two bedrooms were a bit smaller than I imagined, but I was pleased to see the extra storage in the hallway closet that hadn't been mentioned in the information,' she says. 'This is my husband's wardrobe now as I need all the space in our bedroom!'

More importantly, the living-dining room was a delightful discovery with its dual-aspect windows overlooking the front and back. 'The main living space was much bigger than our previous flat and we spend most of our free time in here,' she says. 'It makes our home feel much more spacious than it is.'

A CALM WORKSPACE

Aziza couldn't wait to style her new space. 'I'm a home lover and, as I don't go out to work, I'm always here,' she says. 'It was important to create separate areas so things didn't clash with work, sleep and relaxing.'

She chose the smaller of the two bedrooms for her office and flipped the previous tenants' layout in the living-dining room. 'It would be easy to fall into the trap of doing the same thing, but I didn't want my sofa to be in front of the radiator,' she says. 'This arrangement means the corner section acts as a divider'

DINING ROOM

'We had a balcony in our old flat and I loved my outdoor rattan chairs so much I decided to repurpose them in here,' says Aziza. 'The dining table was bought to fit the chairs – the rounded edges really please me'

OUR MUST HAVES BTFY rattan bistro set, £139.99, Amazon. Lisabo table, £143, IKEA. For a similar runner, try washed linen natural table runner, £27.99, True Linen

▶ 'I knew I wanted a rattan sideboard and had a few to choose between,' says Aziza. 'I picked this one from JYSK as the doors are good quality, the price was affordable and I like the gold handles'



'As I'm here so much, it was important the mood of our home felt right, and uncomplicated neutrals really complement my personality'



KITCHEN

'Black isn't in my colour palette and the old counter tops made the kitchen feel dark,' Aziza says. 'I like wood tones and had to be creative. I found a wood-effect vinyl that I stuck over the surfaces and stick-on beige tiles for the floor'

OUR MUST HAVES d-c-fix self adhesive in San Reno Oak, £4.40, The Range. GoodHome beige marble effect vinyl tile, £20.80 for 14, B&Q

▲ 'I added IKEA shelving to the blank wall and changed the silver handles to a chunky gold bar that feels weighty and high-end,' says Aziza. 'The changes make the kitchen look so much brighter, even my landlord loves what I've done'

▼ The neutral scheme carries through into the kitchen accessories and appliances. Super organised Aziza loves clever storage ideas and so everything has its place, and, of course, working from home means having a stellar coffee set up ready to go too



REAL HOME

Shelving and art add personality without clutter. 'The company I work for uses standing desks in the office and this was the first time I'd seen one,' says Aziza. 'It was great to be able to try it out before committing and I've not looked back since, it's really good'



RENTER FRIENDLY

Use super-strong Command Strips to fix art to the walls as they can be easily removed without leaving any damage and support heavy weights



between the two parts and along with the rug, frames the living room area.'

Although the landlord agreed the couple could make any changes to the flat as long as they were reversible, Aziza was happy with the existing white-grey walls. 'I've never been one for colour – I don't even wear colour – as I don't find bright tones very relaxing,' she says. 'As I'm here so much, it was important the mood of our home felt right, and uncomplicated neutrals really complement my personality.'

PRECISION STYLING

Aziza took inspiration from American houses on Instagram with fresh, coastal, calm looks and boho vibes. 'I particularly love @nabelanoorhome's beautifully neutral scheme. It's a future goal for me,' she says. 'It's important to vary tones, so I've stayed light with the large pieces like the bed, table and sofa that catch the eye, and gone a little deeper with the rattan, gold coffee table legs and wooden accessories.'

She has also paid attention to pattern, favouring understated designs in rugs and cushions. 'I've mixed cushions with stripes, tassel trimmings and tactile embossing,' she says. 'None are the same, but they work because the colours complement one another. I break up the patterned with plain designs.'

Precision styling like this goes hand in hand with Aziza's natural love of



OFFICE

'The rattan drawers appeal to my love of boho,' says Aziza. 'The art is neutral but the abstract lines bring detail while the faux foliage adds a hint of colour'

OUR MUST HAVES BTFY rattan chest of drawers, £152.99, B&Q. Linen Lines No. 1 poster, £8.95, Slay My Print. Algiers vintage gold arched metal mirror, £150, William Wood

organisation. She has labelled jars and canisters in the kitchen and carefully arranged ornaments. 'I've gone around the whole flat to make sure everything has a place, or it has to go,' she says. 'Storage is important and I don't like mess. Simple ideas like stepped shelving for my perfumes, or a gold hook stand for my handbag, really please me. Being organised is just part of who I am.'

Unsurprisingly, Aziza flew through the transformation and has been adding pieces ever since. 'My home means everything to me and I'm much happier since the changes. It's so restful for working and relaxing. That said, I love interiors too much to stay put. I'm hoping one day we can buy a house – which I'll decorate in neutrals, of course!' 🏡



BEDROOM

'This is my perfect bed,' says Aziza. 'I love the creamy neutral look of the headboard which adds something to the plain wall'

OUR MUST HAVES For a similar throw, try Blanca tufted zig zag throw, £22.40, The Wisteria Tree. For a similar pendant shade, try Kylo woven string pendant, £32, Dunelm



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BATHROOM

Storage baskets and a vase of flowers brighten up the bathroom. 'I'm hooked on buying vases,' says Aziza. 'I'm drawn to quirky shapes and have recently begun mixing dried and fresh flowers to vary texture and colour'

OUR MUST HAVES For a similar vase, try White ceramic vase 4 handles, £14.36, Atlas Flowers

