My baby sleeps in a closet, is the first thing you should know. We live in an 800-square-foot one-bedroom apartment in New York City, on the Hell’s Kitchen side of the Upper West Side. It is the perfect little nest for a family of three. 800 square feet, to me, feels entirely enormous. Our last place came in at just under 400 square feet, an apartment barely big enough to hold a coherent thought, so our place now feels practically palatial by comparison.
1. Somewhere to sit
2. Something to do
3. Something utterly useless but very pretty to look at
4. Something cozy
5. Somewhere to put your snacks
6. Somewhere to put your thoughts
7. And you

"Actually, Huck’s hall closet is the piece de resistance of the whole dang joint. It’s my pride and joy."
A closet bedroom might sound strange, but it’s a staple of city survival.

The only difference between a hole and a palace is what you bring to it. That’s what the city’s taught me. You just gotta create a little nest for yourself, a pocket, or in a kid’s case, a fort. (Or Natalie’s version!)
These are my theories on decorating. Go get some popcorn. **LET IT BE USEFUL, BUT ABOVE ALL, LET IT BE BEAUTIFUL.** If there’s one thing I’ve learned while living in a small apartment, it’s that everything should be beautiful. Throw blankets should be lovely, as well as cozy for movie nights and warm for out of town guests. Food storage containers should be pretty. I’ve gotten a lot of mileage out of simple glass jars this way. I store them with pantry goods in the kitchen and display them with candles on the table. They come in real handy when my husband brings home a bouquet of I’m-Sorry-Flowers from the deli. I love to spread a single bouquet out
over six or seven bottles or jars and place them randomly around the house. A bouquet of inexpensive roses trimmed extra short and tossed into a wide-mouthed mason jar on a bedside table is just about the end all be all of my domestic success. A bathroom step stool should be pretty enough that you don’t mind seeing it every day, your towels should be white and fresh, important documents should be filed away in something lovely. You shouldn’t bring it in unless it looks pretty and is ready to pull it’s own weight.

WHEN IN DOUBT, HANG SOME ANTLERS ON IT

The first time you buy parts from a dead woodland creature for decorative purposes is an important milestone in a person’s life. It’s the kind of decorating decision that separates the men from the silk flowers.

I’ve brought so many dead animals into our home in the years since that we’ve become a sort of halfway house for forgotten bull’s eyes. A foster home for easy targets. I somehow know immediately upon introduction to a new stuffed trophy whether that poor dead creature was meant to be a part of our family. It’s a weird sixth sense you get, when you find your stuffed children. We aren’t hunters in our family—we consider killing for sport to be a little bit awful—but providing a loving home for a sad stuffed friend? Well. That is an honest, good sit.

DOILIES

It is, in my estimation, the humble paper doily that pulls the most weight in a woman’s decorative arsenal. You can set a table, you can decorate a Christmas tree, you can protect your surfaces from water damage... make name tags... turn your home into a winter wonderland... you name it! A paper doily is the difference between chocolate chip cookies for the neighbors on a flimsy paper plate and chocolate chip cookies for the neighbors on a pretty, flimsy paper plate.

MAPS

One of my favorite things to hang in a home are maps. Maps of the places you’ve been that are important to your family, maps of the places you grew up, maps of the neighborhood you first met. One year for Christmas I sent my dad a map of Disneyland from 1969 that I’d found on eBay that was printed the same year as the one he’d had hung in his bedroom as a kid. When we moved to Idaho, I framed a few maps of our old neighborhood in Brooklyn—I literally printed them off Google—and hung them in the living room. They looked surprisingly legit for a cheap Hewlitt Packard. When we moved back to New York City and now had a record number of moves under our belts, I bought a Rand...