Enable Dark Mode

The Ten Rules of Dark Mode

Dark design can be striking and memorable, but mastering it requires a considered approach.



From balancing colour and texture to creating contrast, getting it right is all in the detail. As part of Blum's Enable Dark Mode campaign, we've invited industry professionals to share their expertise, revealing their golden rules for incorporating black into interior design.

Drawing on insights from a diverse range of kitchen and interior design specialists, we've brought together practical advice, creative inspiration and expert perspectives on designing with darker tones.

Introducing Blum's Ten Rules of Dark Mode:
An expert-led guide to creating striking, sophisticated and beautifully considered dark interiors.

blum

RULE 1

Treat black as an anchor, not a theme

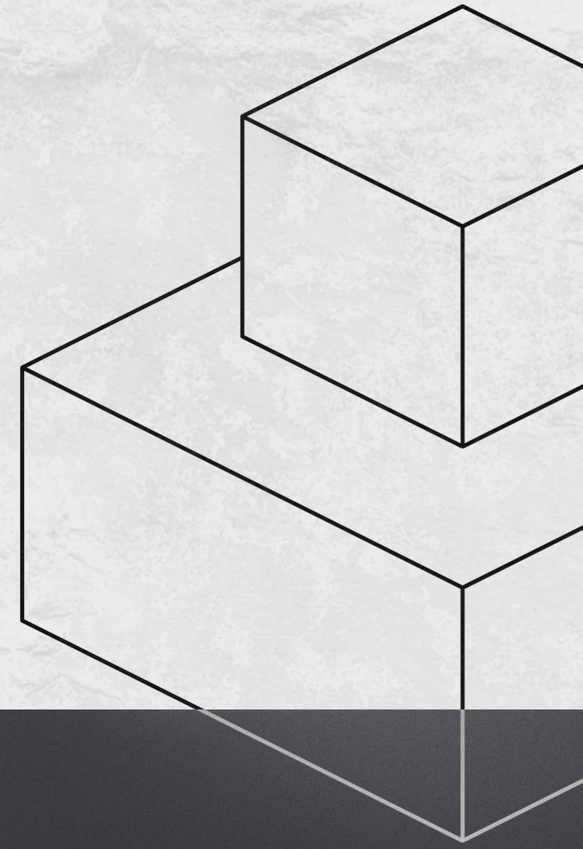
Positioning black as an anchor firstly creates a strong foundation, allowing complementary colours, materials and textures to work together harmoniously.

This measured approach brings balance and cohesion to a space, creating a natural flow throughout the room.

Julie Gokce, Senior Kitchen Designer for More Kitchens, explains as a starting point for any scheme:

Black works best when it has something warm to play against, like natural timber, brushed brass, textured linen or a soft earthy neutral.

Use it to ground a space rather than dominate it. A black island or a run of black cabinetry paired with pale oak floors and warm white walls adds depth and definition without swallowing the light.





RULE 2

Consider eye level details

Black naturally absorbs light rather than reflecting it, making careful consideration of eye-level details particularly important in kitchen design.

The elements within our direct line of sight play a significant role in shaping the room's overall aesthetic, establishing its character and influencing how the space is perceived.

As Cassie Jones, Brand Manager at Masterclass Kitchens, notes:

Black grounds a room when it sits low and closes it in when it sits high. Use it on base units, an island or a run of tall cabinetry against one wall to get the depth and the drama without losing the sense of space.

The eye still travels across the room rather than stopping at a dark band around it. The same square footage of black reads as sophisticated in one position and dominating in the other.

RULE 3

Balance with warmer tones

Black can be a dominant presence in interior design, sometimes creating a sense of heaviness or harshness when used without balance.

Pairing it with warmer tones helps soften this effect, introducing a sense of elegance, warmth and calm while creating a more inviting and harmonious space.

James Mellan-Matulewicz, Creative Interior Director at Bobbi Beck sustainable luxury wallpaper comments:

My number one piece of advice when using the colour black in a space is to always try and balance it with warmer tones. Black isn't a colour we naturally gravitate towards when it comes to interiors, as it can often be associated with spaces that feel heavy and dark.

However, when used thoughtfully, it can work exceptionally well by pairing with warm woods or natural warm stone to add softer neutral tones that provide contrast and balance to the space.

RULE 4

Let lighting do the heavy lifting

Lighting emerged as a key consideration among several of the experts, with many identifying it as their number one rule for designing with black.

From highlighting architectural features to adding depth and atmosphere, thoughtfully planned lighting can transform a dark interior, enhancing its character and creating a more balanced, inviting space.

Jade Jones, Designer, Et Lorem agrees, stating:

By balancing dark zones with strategic lighting, fluted glass cabinets, and natural materials, you can maintain an open and inviting atmosphere rather than a heavy or enclosed space.

Lucy Darke, Kitchen Designer at Nolte Kuchen Nottingham, concludes:

Warm, considered lighting brings out the depth in black finishes and prevents them from feeling one-dimensional.

Black absorbs light, so a room with black features needs layered lighting (ambient, task and accent) to stop it feeling like a cave. Use warm bulbs (2700-3000K), let metallic finishes catch the light, and consider placing black away from your main light source so it reads as a shadowed accent rather than a black hole.

Julie Gokce, Senior Kitchen Designer for More Kitchens.



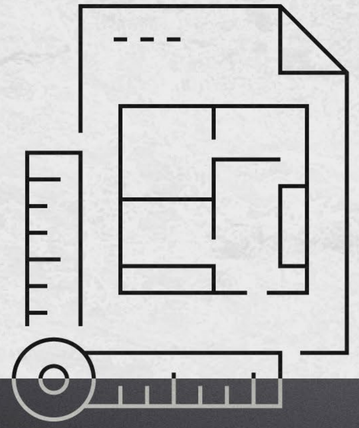
blum

RULE 5

Remember black should be architecture, not decoration

When treated as an architectural element rather than simply a decorative feature, black can help define structure, create depth through shadow and establish clear spatial boundaries.

This allows it to shape the character of a room, bringing a sense of purpose, balance and cohesion to the overall design.



Craig Harvey, Business Development Manager, Lorien Interiors, explains:

Black can visually erase detail, so I use it to simplify awkward junctions, recess appliances, unify tall cabinetry and control how the eye moves through a space. I then light the edges and textures rather than flooding the dark surfaces. If a black element is only there because it's fashionable, remove it. In a successful kitchen, every black surface should either define, disguise or deliberately disappear.

RULE 6

Embrace anti-fingerprint technology

Advances in anti-fingerprint surface technology have made dark, matt kitchen schemes increasingly practical in recent years.

By helping to minimise visible fingerprints and smudges, these innovative finishes make it easier to maintain a sleek, sophisticated aesthetic without compromising on everyday functionality.

Samantha Thompson, Architect & Design Marketing Manager at Blum UK, notes:

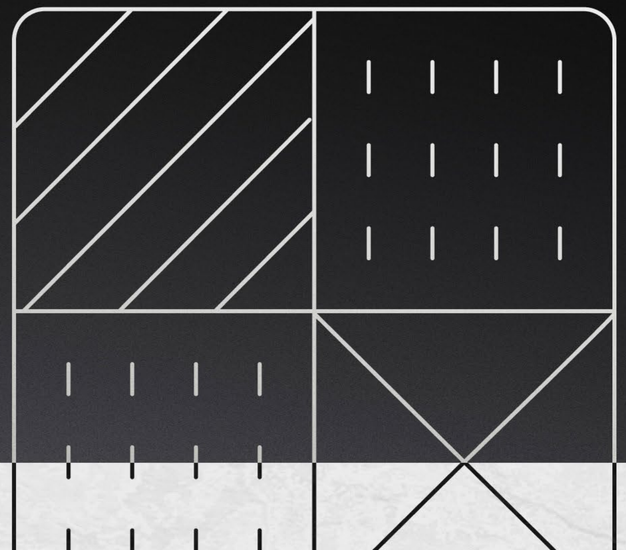
Historically, choosing a matt black kitchen meant constantly battling fingerprints and smudges, with everyday use leaving visible marks on surfaces. Today, advances in surface technology have transformed the practicality of darker finishes, helping them retain their sleek, sophisticated appearance. Opting for anti-fingerprint surfaces means homeowners can enjoy the striking aesthetic of a dark kitchen without the constant upkeep, combining beautiful design with everyday practicality.

RULE 7

Never ignore the importance of texture

Texture plays a vital role in preventing dark interiors from appearing flat or heavy, introducing depth, contrast and visual interest. By breaking up uniform surfaces and creating subtle distinctions between design elements, texture brings balance and character to a space.

It was also a recurring theme among the experts, with many identifying it as a key consideration when designing with black.



Lucy Darke, Kitchen Designer, Nolte Kuchen Nottingham, comments:

My golden rule for using black is to balance it out with warmth and texture. Black can be incredibly sophisticated, but large areas of a flat black finish can feel heavy or stark. I like to layer it with tactile materials such as warm timber, natural stone, textured surfaces and softer metallics like bronze, for example. Used this way, black becomes a grounding element that adds richness and contrast rather than dominating the space.

Adrian Stoneham, Managing Director of Stoneham Kitchens, also places great emphasis on texture.

My golden rule for designing with black is to layer texture and warmth. A flat, uniform black can sometimes feel heavy, but a finish with depth, such as an oak painted door, combined with a softly veined stone worktop, lets the colour feel rich rather than stark. Then introduce a warm accent, like brushed brass handles, timber shelves or wooden pull-out trays, to bring the scheme to life.

Dan Lowe, Owner, Franklin Lowe Property Ltd, adds:

The golden rule for using black in kitchen design. Don’t let black stand alone, give it warmth and texture. Black cabinetry can look very high end, but too much black combined with cool whites, greys and stainless steel can make a kitchen feel flat, cold or harsh. Pair it with something natural and tactile, such as warm oak, veined stone, aged brass/bronze, and warm lighting.

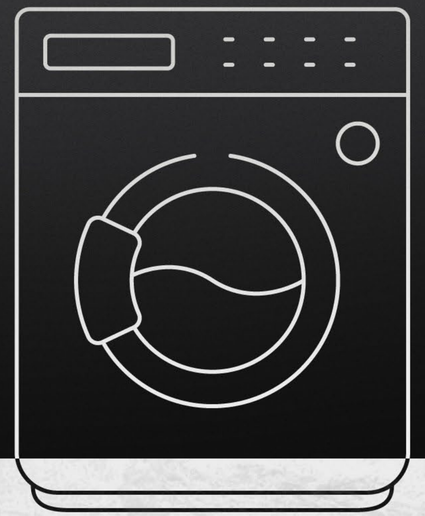
RULE 8

Introduce integrated appliances

Dark spaces can quickly feel cluttered when multiple appliances compete for visual attention.

Choosing integrated appliances helps create a sleek, uninterrupted aesthetic, allowing clean lines and a sense of cohesion to take centre stage.

> ***Jade Jones, Designer at Et Lorem, believes integrated appliances are an important way to complete a dark kitchen, commenting:***
>
> Fully integrated black built-in appliances when flush-mounted into dark cabinetry is ideal when creating a seamless kitchen design with a minimalist aesthetic.

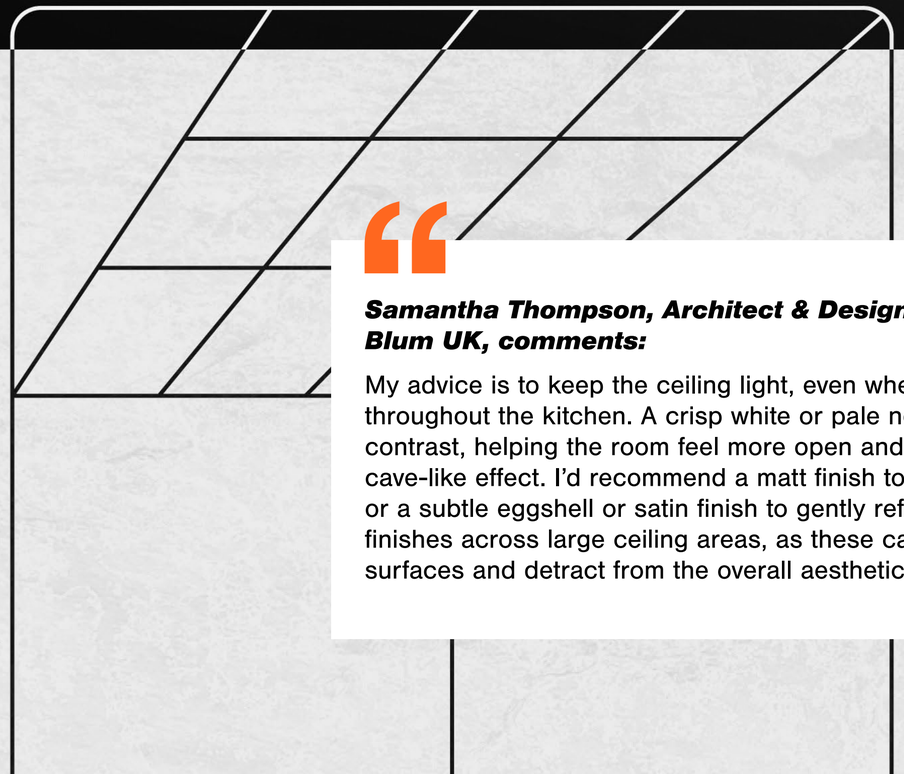


RULE 9

Go lighter overhead

One potential pitfall of dark kitchen design is the ‘cave effect’, where darker tones can make a space feel enclosed and the ceiling appear lower than it is.

Introducing lighter colours overhead helps counteract this effect, creating a greater sense of height and openness while maintaining the depth and sophistication of the overall scheme.



> ***Samantha Thompson, Architect & Design Marketing Manager at Blum UK, comments:***
>
> My advice is to keep the ceiling light, even when embracing darker tones throughout the kitchen. A crisp white or pale neutral creates welcome contrast, helping the room feel more open and preventing that enclosed, cave-like effect. I’d recommend a matt finish to disguise imperfections, or a subtle eggshell or satin finish to gently reflect light. Avoid high-gloss finishes across large ceiling areas, as these can accentuate uneven surfaces and detract from the overall aesthetic.

RULE 10

Keep contrast front of mind

Building on the importance of texture and warmer tones, contrast emerged as another golden rule for creating successful dark kitchen interiors.

Thoughtfully combining different colours, materials and finishes helps introduce depth and visual interest, ensuring darker elements complement rather than overwhelm the space.

As Matt Cockrem, Designer and Project Manager, Inglis Hall, shares:

The key to bringing a dark palette to life is contrast. We think beyond colour and consider how different materials can create contrast through texture, tone and the way they respond to light. Blackened band-sawn oak, Richlite and Fenix, for example, each bring very different qualities and depth to a space.

We like to set these darker finishes against the warmth of natural timber, the character of stone or the subtle reflection of metal. It's this layering of contrasts that stops black feeling flat or one-dimensional. Black then becomes another material to work with, rather than simply a colour.

Selena Quick, Founder & Creative Director at PAD, adds:

My golden rule is never to use black on its own, because it can look heavy and lifeless. The key is to layer it with contrasting finishes to give it depth, and well-designed lighting to keep the room warm and defined after dark. Walnut and antique brass make a beautiful combination with black, as the timber adds warmth and the brass catches the light. The mix of matt and metallic does the work, so the scheme feels rich and inviting, rather than heavy.

Enable Dark Mode

About Blum
Dark Components

Great design deserves solutions that keep up with it, never forcing a choice between form and function, never asking an idea to be smaller than it was imagined.

Dark components by Blum enable coordinated fittings across the home, creating true harmony between a design's aesthetics and creating effortless functionality.

Blum has now completed its dark range of furnishing solutions with the introduction of an eclipse black finish across its AVENTOS top lift systems.

Now available for AVENTOS HF top, HS top, HL top and HK top, the new eclipse black style joins Blum's onyx black hinges and carbon black LEGRABOX drawer system to create one complete dark collection.

Whether used to create a fully dark interior or as a considered accent against lighter furniture, the expanded range gives designers greater freedom to carry a consistent aesthetic through an entire scheme, coordinating lift systems, hinges and drawers in one cohesive specification.

Three solutions.
One complete dark range.
Enable Dark Mode on your next design.

For more information, please visit:
www.blum.com/gb/en/ or
contact info.uk@blum.com

Your world. Made better.

blum®