

The English Home

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by the eighteenth century chairs with an upholstered seat had become more common. At this time it was common to sit in the library with a precious book placed on a table, rather than one's lap, so a straight-backed chair was essential. "Early chairs were in oak or walnut, but by the eighteenth century, mahogany was the favourite wood," says Paul Reed, of Reed and Rackstraw, makers of fine English chairs. Choose a dining chair, rather than a carver chair, as it is easier to draw up to a desk. Also, when buying a new chair, advises Reed, look for classic mortice and tenon joints, and upholstery with traditional webbing. A loose cover in linen or cotton is practical.

THE LIBRARY ARMCHAIR

With its straight back and deep seat, the library armchair emerged in the eighteenth century, says architect and designer Ben Pentreath. "A good library chair, even today, should allow you to sit and read in comfort, but not be so squishy that you fall asleep," he adds. Traditionally, such masculine chairs featured leather upholstery, and it is still possible, says Jorge Perez-Martin, of Brownrigg @ Home, specialist in antique leather chairs, to buy early nineteenth-century examples, with their original green or red leather upholstery intact. Look out for interesting variations in chair style, such as nineteenth-century reclining armchairs. For a good leather antique chair, it is possible to spend up to £2,000, but twentieth-century

club-style versions, often hailing from France, can be cheaper. Modern-day library chairs, with colourful fabric rather than leather, add charm to a study. Ben Pentreath's library chair, available in Josef Franks's 1940s print linen, gives a fresh spin on the library chair.

THE GLOBE

Despite the existence of Google Earth, there is still an enduring appeal to spinning a globe. Gillian Hutchinson, curator of cartography at the National Maritime Museum, says globes were popularised in England in the sixteenth century, as the age of exploration took hold. "They were made using layers of papier mâché, plastered over to create a perfect sphere, and then covered in globe gauze, with the printed map in place," she explains, adding that typically globes came in pairs, one showing the world, the other the constellations. Globes were commonly supported in turned wood stands, with brass horizon rings and meridians. Globes remain popular today and Stanfords, a map specialist for 150 years, offers everything from modest tabletop designs to floor-standing globes. Look for variations on touch illumination, map colour, raised relief, or modern styling, including silver maps and stainless steel detailing to find one to suit a room scheme.

THE FREE-STANDING BOOKCASE

Despite today's obsession with built-in cabinets, free-standing bookcases can travel ▶

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

An antique drop-leaf desk is a decorative solution in a home office that also doubles as a sitting room. Pretty fabrics for curtains or upholstery soften the workmanlike mood. Chair covered in Dorn 231007, £49 a metre; cushion in Dorn 231005, £49 a metre; with button in Canvas 231022, £46 a metre, all Sanderson. In this luxurious library-cum-study, a tall library ladder is a stylish yet sensible addition, perfect for accessing high level books. Room designed by Todhunter Earle. If there is space in the study, a globe set into a frame creates a wonderful focal point. Geographical and topographical globe set in a walnut frame with fluted column legs, £2,500, Linley.