



Chief flat-panel TV mounts make it possible to tuck a flat-panel TV into any room of your home.



Furnishings With Flair

A flat-panel TV demands more of the furniture around it.

FLAT-PANEL TVS HAVE OPENED UP A WORLD OF DESIGN OPTIONS. Whether you're a flaunt-it or hide-it kind of TV owner, there are stands and mounts to suit your needs—more options than you've ever dreamed of actually. Tables, stands, armoires, bureaus dressers, lifts and arms—all designed expressly for flat panels—make them more than just a screen on which to watch a flickering image.

Of course, sleek LCD and plasma TVs beg to be mounted on a wall, which most of us intend to do. However, statistics show most people don't actually follow through on this plan, leaving a lot of TVs sitting on stands. "People are telling us they want to wall mount their TV," says Jim Wohlford, general

manager of Sanus, makers of TV mounts and cabinets, "but probably only half of those are, or less."

The surest way not to become a statistic is to arrange for professional installation before leaving the store. Custom installers will best be able to walk you through the myriad of options available, but it's also good to have some understanding of terminology, the many products and their benefits while considering a purchase. Knowledge is power, of course.

It's tempting to think of wall mounting as a simple thing. But even if you're just putting a screen up, there are things to consider, like getting that screen as close to the wall as possible.

"There are a lot of mounts that hold the TV four to five



The best flat-panel TV mounts keep that thin TV as close to the wall as possible.



Sligh Furniture Company TV console

inches out from the wall,” says Wohlford. “But if you have a TV that’s only two inches thick, it looks silly.”

Choose a mount that allows the screen to lie as flush to the wall as possible. High-quality mounts will put the TV just an inch or two out. Or have the mounting mechanism recessed with an in-wall mount and swing arm to give the aesthetic similar to picture hanging on a wall.

Even if the TV is as flush as possible, different mechanisms will allow for more viewing options. A basic in-wall box mount lets you pull the TV away from the wall a short distance and angle it a bit. For more versatility, get a mount that allows for a wider range of motion and more tilting.

Go for a full-motion or articulated mount, which provides the most versatility and more freedom to mount a TV in otherwise awkward places, such as in corners or in rooms where seating arrangements are more fluid. Advanced models from Sanus allow for tilting with just a touch of a finger, no small feat considering how heavy a plasma or LCD screen can get, especially in the larger sizes.

The placement of the screen in the room has a lot to do with which mount you choose. For a dedicated home theater or traditional family room, wall mounts might not need a very wide range of motion if simply mounted above a piece of furniture.

Over a fireplace, however, the ability to tilt becomes more important, as the placement can be a bit high for comfortable viewing of longer programs and movies. Make sure the screen

will angle down for a better viewing experience. Motorized mounts are the ultimate in control, letting the viewer adjust screen placement and direction with a touch of a button from the comfort of an easy chair.

There are even motorized mounts and lifts for projectors. Digital projectors offer a truer cinematic experience than a TV and can project digital signals onto a wall or large screen. Movie screens can be mounted to a ceiling so they virtually disappear when retracted, and specialized furnishings mask the projector itself in ways that will impress guests for movie night. Flip a switch, and a projector rises from a coffee table, the screen lowers, lights dim, and it’s show time.

Flat-panel TVs can even be mounted from a ceiling rather than a wall, allowing for very creative placements, including in front of windows or shelves. Mounts that attach beneath cabinetry make mounting a small panel in the kitchen as easy as flipping that same panel up and tucking it out of sight when not being watched.

“There are a lot of elements needed to keep these (TVs) beautiful and working well,” says Sara Schiffler, marketing manager at Chief Manufacturing. “There are a lot of opportunities for placement. It’s just a matter of preference and finding the right solution to fit that vision.”

Wall mounting isn’t for everyone or every room. Again, there are plenty of options to fit every style and décor.

“We have an interesting divide between the people who



Chameleon Collection by Salamander



Ceiling mounts from Sanus Systems tilt and swivel in all directions for multiple viewing angles.

Salamander TV mounts



have no problem having a TV out in the open and those who need to hide it away," says Rob Sligh, chairman of Sligh Furniture Co. Sligh has made wooden furniture for nearly 130 years and today applies traditional craftsmanship to house our modern technology. "(Often, customers) have up to seven TVs in the home, and there's not one answer to any of these things."

Simple glass and steel or wooden TV stands are everywhere. But a sophisticated flat-panel television deserves an equally sophisticated stand.

An automated lift is a very sexy way to store and watch a TV in the bedroom. A cabinet at the foot of the bed equipped with a motorized lift keeps the screen out of view when off and then raises it up for viewing. A remote control lets this all happen without having to kick off the covers.

Armoires to hide TVs, even flat-panel TVs, are still an option. Since the electronics themselves are so much thinner, the furniture to house them is a much less bulky storage piece than in the past.

There are even enclosures to house TVs outdoors, protecting a plasma or LCD from the elements so you can watch a show, sporting event or movie in the backyard or terrace.

Or combine a lift and wall unit; custom cabinetry can do

both. A bookcase or shelving unit easily transforms into a media center with the TV rising from a center cabinet. When lowered, the room once again looks like a library or showroom with nary a screen in sight. Other options include wall units with bi-fold doors that close across the screen.

Media furniture has become much more versatile to accommodate a range of design tastes and space solutions. A new group of options combine the elegance of wall mounting with impermanence and mobility of furniture.

These pieces are essentially a bureau with a false wall rising up from the back of the piece in the same material and finish as the cabinet. The flat panel mounts to the wall, and cords and cables are easily hidden behind the false back. Cabinets below provide much needed closed storage for components, and the false wall offers additional storage, as CDs and DVDs fit neatly in side-facing shelves. For smaller spaces, Sligh's Strong Arm mounts a flat panel to the rear of a furniture stand, giving the appearance of a wall-mounted screen without the installation.

Today's media furniture is so much more than the glass and steel stands. Customization offers endless configurations. Whether your taste runs to the traditional or contemporary, there's a solution for every home and need. ■