

Sharing Bath Space

by Jamie Fisher

The half-dozen or so standard small bath floor plans found in reference texts like *Graphic Standards* will work in most situations. However, occasionally you face a situation requiring a little innovation. The house illustrated in Figure 1 is such a situation. This bath is not working for the family of four that lives there. I should know: It's my house. My wife and I have two teenagers, a daughter and a son, and only this one bathroom. As a result, it's a bottleneck at both ends of the day, and it's always a mess. We're tired of it, so like the rest of America, we're adding another bath.

Existing Bath

The existing bath, dating from a late 1960s renovation, is one of the standard

compact bath layouts. Despite its tiny size (5 feet 6 inches by 7 feet), it has some good traits. Its floor space runs the full length of the tub, giving it a roomy feel. The toilet is tucked discreetly beyond the vanity cabinet, where it doubles as a seat from which to supervise a small child in the tub. The 6-inch tile shelf at the end of the tub is indispensable for soaps and shampoo bottles. Plus, there's a big window.

But the room's size poses problems. The door swing smacks the rear of anyone standing at the sink and conflicts with the drawers nearest the door. When open, the door lies against the tub, cutting up an already small space. The window extends over the tub, which looks unresolved, interferes with the shower

curtain, and invites water damage to the wood casing.

First Solution

Figure 2 shows my first proposed renovation. In this scheme, the original bathroom is enlarged and a second bath is added as part of a new master suite. The driving impulse was to give each family member his or her own sink. Unfortunately, this scheme breaks a couple of basic bath layout rules, both concerning the toilet. First, you're not supposed to put the toilet facing the entry door, as it is in the kids' bath in this scheme. This is considered inelegant. Similarly, putting a toilet tight against a bathtub, as occurs in both the baths in this plan, puts the

Existing Bath

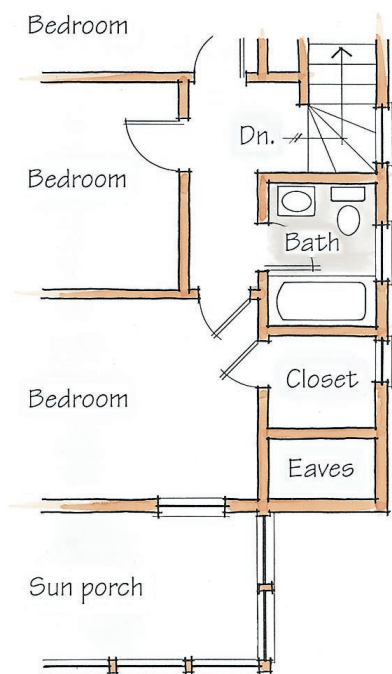


Figure 1. With two teen-aged kids, the author and his wife found their one small bathroom increasingly bottlenecked at the beginning and end of the day.

First Design

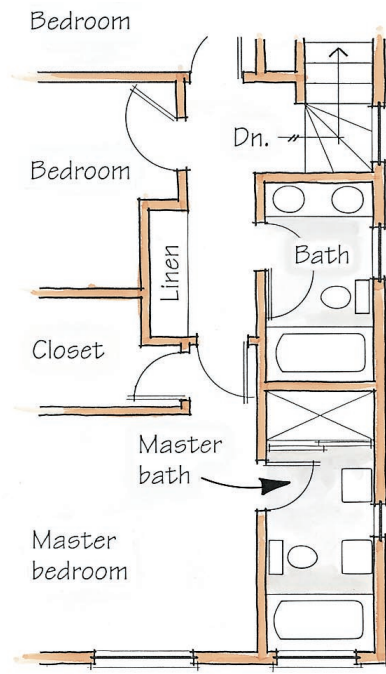


Figure 2. The author's first solution created a master bath, and gave each of the kids his or her own sink, but it left unanswered the bottleneck at shower time.

Final Design

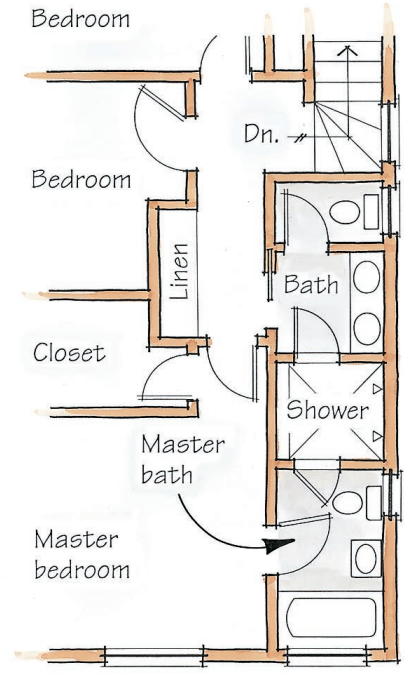


Figure 3. The solution lay in putting the toilet in a "water closet" and giving two paths to the double shower — which could later be divided into two showers if desired.

toilet more or less in the face of anyone taking a bath. (Placing the sink tight up against the tub is not great either, especially if your client wants a vanity cabinet instead of a pedestal or wall-hung sink.)

The major problem with the plan in Figure 2, however, is that it doesn't really solve the original bottleneck. The second bath gets my wife and me out of the first, but we are not really the problem. Any privacy-conscious kid using the toilet or the tub ties up the whole bathroom — sinks, commode, shower — for a long time. And though the kids prefer baths to showers for now, that will soon change, and the dedicated shower is in the master bath.

Final Plan

Hence my second solution, shown in Figure 3. This scheme solves the traffic problem in the kids' bath by providing a separate toilet compartment (or "water closet") and a large shower room that can be accessed from either bath by way of frosted glass doors equipped with privacy locks. A pocket door solves the door swing problem. (Much as I hate pocket doors, I can accept this one because I know it will be open almost all the time, since it needn't be closed when someone uses the toilet.)

This arrangement makes the sinks available more of the time, gives the toilet its own space, and provides two avenues into the shower at all times. The big two-doored, double shower is highly

unorthodox and is probably not for everyone. However, the drains will be located so that I or a future buyer can easily run a glass block divider down the middle to produce a more conventional arrangement. I could also later replace the kid's shower with a shower/tub combo unit. Variations on this basic idea (such as two half-baths on either side of a single, standard-size shower/tub) could provide similar benefits in an even smaller space — almost anywhere you wanted to put a kids' bath or a guest bath next to a master bath.



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