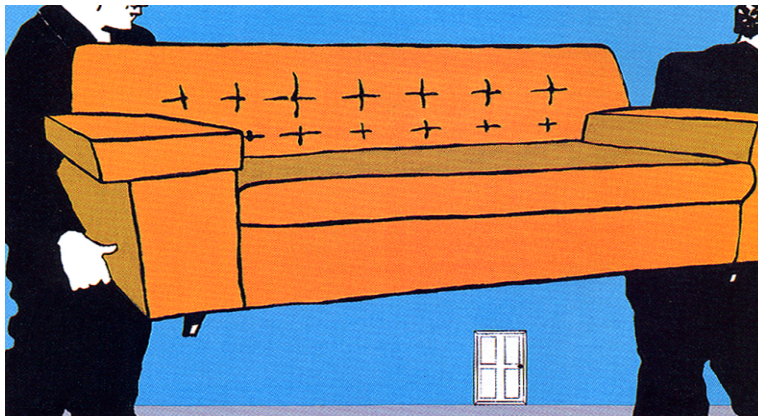




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Home Style

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CAVEAT EMPTOR

The Big Squeeze

What can you do when your new sofa doesn't fit through the door?

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Q: My decorator and I picked out a sofa together for my apartment, and when it arrived the movers couldn't get it through the door. Is she responsible for the problem or am I? What should I do?

A: Don't worry—just yet. Many legs screw off noncustom sofas, or can be sawed off and reattached onsite. Generally, the arms can also be taken off and put back on quite easily, and you can even recut your upholstery to cut down the sofa for about 10 percent to 20 percent of the cost. In fact, it's not unheard of to have a sofa assembled—frame to stitchings—right in your home if you know it won't get through the door. In your case, however, my coordination it takes to get the sofa inside should be assumed by your interior decorator. Although she should have considered the will-this-fit-through-the-door? issue beforehand, you are in all likelihood responsible for the cost, as you most certainly would have been if this issue surfaced the moment you both picked out the sofa. Should the decorator decide to cover some, or all, of the cost for the inconvenience, recommend her to everyone you know.

If you've exhausted every avenue and getting the sofa inside is an impossibility, your decorator should do all she can to get you out of this dilemma. If you're lucky, the piece comes from the decorator's own product line and exchanging it should be a no-brainer (any additional fabric costs to you should be at net, at the most). If not, your decorator should work with the store or upholsterer to find a mutually satisfactory solution (the best decorators eat costs under such circumstances, but this is not usual).

For those of you flying solo in retail shops, note that certain stores, especially those dealing in custom furniture, offer to measure your doors free before the piece is manufactured. Take advantage of this: It is best to know about these issues in advance, and the store bears a certain degree of responsibility if it says the piece will fit and it doesn't. Stores that offer customizing options like choice of stock fabrics will generally accept a return, but you may risk losing the deposit, which typically ranges from 25 to 40 percent of the total cost. For anything bought off the floor, most stores offer a full refund within a given return period. However, don't expect to be able to return a custom-made piece or a sofa upholstered in the customer's own material, especially if the store did not come to measure.

As a last resort, consider the windows. With the help of three doormen and my super, we pushed my beautiful new English sofa through the second-floor window into my office. It took almost as much effort as the birth of my second daughter, but the sofa landed safely.