

# HOME STYLE

## THE OTTOMAN

Words: **CLARE GOGERTY**

There's no real reason to own an ottoman. It's not an essential piece of furniture like a sofa or a kitchen table.

No home has to have one of these padded and upholstered items. Its actual function is enigmatic: is it a place to sit on temporarily (its absence of back or arms doesn't invite lingering), or is it a place to rest your feet? Should you consider it as an upholstered coffee table and pile magazines upon it? Or is it for storing elderly blankets and other soon-to-be forgotten items?

It is, of course, all of these things. Which is why it is worth considering as an addition to your home. Even more so, since furniture makers have rediscovered it, and are producing versions in attractive colours, some with 'button tufting' (below) a phrase that is too beguiling to resist.

These new ottomans are no longer only found in the over-stuffed drawing rooms of the well-to-do. Now we can all benefit from one, either in the living room, where its low height and padding make it child-friendly, or situated at the end of the bed, where it



*"Its origins lend it an exotic air, lacking in humdrum furniture"*

provides a useful place to sit and pull on your socks.

The ottoman's origins lend it an exotic air, lacking in more humdrum pieces of furniture, like the armchair, say, or the footstool. Its roots, unsurprisingly given its name, are in the Ottoman Empire, with its first incarnation being a wooden platform laden with cushions. Ideal for lounging about on, possibly with a sweetly scented hookah pipe.

When it was introduced to Europe, in the 18th century, it remained essentially a low platform heaped with cushions, but ran around three sides of the room. Over time, the ottoman kept its low centre of gravity but shape-shifted into octagons, circles and rectangles. By the 19th century, it was popular in gentleman's clubs and developed a central padded column, where gentlemen could lean to read the paper.

The hinged lid came later and is its most useful modification. What other piece of furniture enables you to store unused stuff and perch and chat to people sat on the sofa? There's your reason to own one right there. **S**

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

## THE UPDATES



**Arthur stool | £405**

Large enough to rest a stockinged foot and a couple of mags, plus nicely turned legs and button tufting. [neptune.com](http://neptune.com)

THE  
CLASSIC



**Scott round ottoman in burnt orange cotton velvet | £349**

A pouffe by any other name. [made.com](http://made.com)

TWO  
GREAT  
TWISTS



**Cobalt Stasher storage footstool | £525**

Nicely plump and buttoned, and with a hinged lid to store blankets and similar. [loaf.com](http://loaf.com)