

That's right. One of our most common and useful pieces of furniture is problematic: The coffee table.

There are a few things you can do to mitigate the anomalies it creates:

1. Place it to the side of the listening area instead of right directly between the speakers and the listeners. A couple of end tables beside the listeners is better acoustically than a coffee table in front of the listeners.
2. When a coffee table in front of the listeners is desired, use one that is as small as possible. Limit the flat (reflective) surface area.
3. Place books and other things on it to diffuse and "soften" the reflection.

Directional speakers can also be used to reduce the problem, but the truth is that most speakers (even directional ones) lack control in the vertical.