

Tips For Choosing The Right Color

How will the room be used?

In a small space where you won't spend much time - a powder room, an entrance hall - color can be much more dramatic or playful.

How big is the room?

Dark colors work well in small spaces, where they create intimacy, and also in large rooms with lots of sunlight. Light colors feel open and expansive, and make large rooms feel fresh and airy.

How do you want the room to feel?

And how do you want it to make you feel? Warm or cool? Spacious or snug? Serene or energetic? We all react differently to color, depending on our associations with it. But it's always extremely powerful. Don't underestimate the effect it can have on your mood.

What kind of lighting do you have?

Incandescent bulbs give a warm, golden glow to some colors. The blue-white light of fluorescent fixtures cools off colors considerably: halogen fixtures tend to sap and flatten color. To be really accurate, paint test swatches on your walls.

Will it be a day room or a night room?

Again, it's wise to paint test swatches on your walls and check them at the time of day when you plan to use the room. The quality of natural light changes considerably during the course of the day, from pink and lilac in the morning, to lemon yellow at noon, to a deep, rich gold in the evening. The color of light also varies widely from one region of the country to the next.

How many windows are there?

Does the room face north, south, east or west? A northern exposure throws cool blue light that you might want to balance with warm-toned walls. A southern exposure, particularly in the southern United States, tends to drain a color's vitality: to stand up to it, color needs to be more vivid.

What color are your lampshades?

A white paper shade throws much cooler light, for example, than a natural silk shade.

What are the predominant colors of your furniture, upholstery, carpets, and artwork?

Look to them for inspiration, but fight the impulse to match. For example, if blue is dominant in your furnishings, choose a blue paint with some gray in it. By throwing the shade off slightly, you'll avoid the feeling that the room is too rigidly coordinated.

Would you consider using different colors for the walls, ceiling, trim and floor in the same room?

Color doesn't have to mean bold hues lavishly applied. Even if you don't want to live with strong color, don't assume that a mix of colors isn't for you. Some of the most beautiful rooms, are combinations of neutrals creatively used.

What color are your window treatments?

How much light do they block? Venetian blinds, especially, will change the color of a room – for example, mahogany blinds will cast a reddish glow on your walls.

What color is the floor?

How highly polished is it? Carpeting may bounce color off your walls. A highly polished wood floor, however, can boost the light considerably.

What colors are flattering to you?

If you are planning to paint a bathroom, dressing room, or bedroom, choose a color that is flattering to your skin tones.

What kind of paint will you need?

For most walls you'll want flat paint, especially if your walls are less than perfect. Satin is good for kitchen and bathroom walls, while semi-gloss is best to highlight woodwork and doors, and it's more durable. For the surfaces that will get the most wear or exposure to the elements, choose high gloss.

What inspires you?

Get a 2-by-4 foot piece of poster board and a box of pushpins. Cover it with all the paint, and fabric swatches you're considering, as well as with pictures of rooms you have clipped from books and magazines. If you're doing several rooms, make one of these "story boards" for each. By bringing all your ideas and inspirations together your room will work better together.

Do you want to make smaller changes or completely redecorate?

If redecorating involves major expense beyond your budget, perhaps you can work a favorite new color into your room in a small way - in pillows, or dishes, or by painting a piece of furniture or a picture frame.



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