



How To Choose A Room Color

A GUIDE TO GETTING IT RIGHT

COLOR IS EMOTION. The **idea** of any color holds an emotional charge, which is **specific to you**. You want to choose room colors which make you **FEEL** the way you want to, in any particular space.

At the same time, the **EXPERIENCE** of a color is distinct from the **IDEA** of that color. A slight shift in the hue, the light, the ceiling height, the time of day, and your **experience** of that color will **change completely**.

So when you are picking a room color, it is important to start with color **IDEAS** that trigger the feelings you want. Then you test the **EXPERIENCE** of different hues, through swatch testing.

GENERAL COLOR PRINCIPLES

- In spaces with **low natural light** (ground floor, low ceilings, high latitudes), you want to seek **medium-value, medium-saturation** colors, with plenty of neutrals mixed in. Bright, high-saturation colors will feel uncomfortable; pale colors will look dingy. Examples: burgundy, sage green, Wedgwood blue.
- Spaces with **higher natural light** (large windows, high ceilings, tropical latitudes) can handle **paler and brighter hues**.
- **Never try to brighten a dark space by painting it white.**
- Make a **small room** feel cozy, **larger and brighter** by choosing a **mid-range wall color** and **lighter trim**.
- Add interest to a **large room** without overwhelming it, by using a **neutral color** on the walls and a **saturated color** on the trim.
- Colors which work well on walls tend to **shift with the light, time of day, and season of the year**. Ideally you want colors which feel **cool in the summer** and **warm in the winter**.

White wall, works with large, high windows

BRIGHT, saturated yellow accent

Sage green: mid-range, shifts from warm to cool



CHOOSING YOUR PALETTE

- Pick out some **favorite items** with colors that appeal to you. Things like:
 - **Textiles**--rug, blanket, curtain
 - Favorite items of **clothing**
 - **Artwork**--paintings, photos, posters
 - **Pottery**
- **Identify specific hues** which trigger a positive feeling in your heart.
- Pick up several **paint swatch cards** in those hues at the paint store.
- **DO NOT BUY PAINT YET.**
- Bring the swatches into your space and **observe how they react** with the light. Put them up against each wall in turn.
- Pick **three to six shades** to swatch test, keeping in mind that they will look **MUCH MORE INTENSE** when covering the whole wall. A good rule of thumb is to **pick the color that looks right**, then go **two shades lighter**.



- Return to the paint store, and **get samples mixed** in your test colors. Samples should be **SMALL**.
- Get a handful of **disposable brushes** which fit easily in the sample jars (about two inches wide) or a few **good brushes** that you are **willing to wash**.
- If you are disinclined to mess up your walls, get a stack of **foam core board** sheets at least two feet by two feet.
- Make sure you have plenty of rags, drop cloths, and painter's tape.
- **Paint two-by-two foot swatches** of each color on **each wall** of your room, or paint two-by-two foot sheets of foam core in each color, that you can move around.
- **Observe how the colors behave at different times of day**. Sit with them for at least a day or two, or as long as a week.
- You will know the color is right when you feel a **warm fuzzy sensation in your solar plexus** when sitting in front of it.

TYPES OF PAINT

- **Matte:** only good for ceilings. Scratches easily.
- **Eggshell:** good for imperfect walls. Smudge resistant, washes easily, dries quickly. Mildly reflective.
- **Satin:** Cleans easily, reflects more light. Good for both walls and trim.
- **Semi-gloss:** Good for trim. Durable, shiny, adds depth.
- **Gloss:** Use strategically. Can be effective when used in dark colors in small spaces.
- **Paint + primer in one:** Saves a LOT of work. Medium-grade paint + primer usually gets excellent coverage in one or two coats.



SUPPLY LIST

- Roller set
- Roller extender
- Disposable tray liners
- Disposable rollers (washing and re-using rollers is NOT WORTH IT)
- Dropcloth (heavy canvas, not plastic)
- Trim brushes in two or three widths, angled
- Painter's tape
- LOTS OF RAGS
- Rinse bucket
- Hand-held paint bucket
- Step ladder
- Sponges (pop-up work well)
- Latex or rubber gloves
- Goggles
- Masks
- Portable fan
- Plastic bags (for wrapping wet rollers for re-use)
- Claw hammer (for removing random hardware in the walls)
- Screwdriver (ditto)
- Hand-held power sander
- Sandpaper
- PAINT in the colors you have selected