

Tips for Choosing Paint Color

Maybe you've seen them too -- that young couple standing nervously in front of the paint counter. What started as eagerness has turned to intimidation when confronted with thousands of paint chips in a rainbow of colors. Like others before them, they'll spend a confusing Saturday morning trying to figure out what color paint to buy. Here are some tips to help them make a choice.



Wait to *buy* paint! Since paint is available in thousands of colors, it's the most versatile element of your room decor, so decide on it *after* rugs, wallpaper, and fabrics are finalized. It's great to collect paint chips when planning a room, but hold off making final choices until you've developed an overall room scheme.

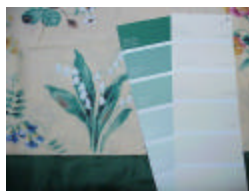
Take all of your swatches (carpet, tile, wallpaper, fabrics, trims, etc.) with you when you shop, and *refer to them constantly*.

When you look at a strip of paint chips, be sure to notice if the overall color is what you want. For example, on the three blue paint strips above, the light blue on each is fairly similar. But the deepest colors on the card will show you the subtle differences, with the left card being a clear marine blue, the middle card a smoky blue, and the right tending toward a duskier midnight blue. These deeper shades -- even though you may not use them -- are giving clues about the underlying tones of all the colors on that card.

In general, the background color of your fabric (or a lighter version of it) is a logical choice for the walls. For example, with this yellow floral fabric, the yellow or white could be a good choice for wall color, while the blue might be used on an accent wall or on a piece of painted furniture. Trim colors are often white or off-white, but could be any color.



Notice that there are "warm" and "cool" tones of individual colors. Reds and pinks are considered "warm" colors, however many reds and pinks have a warmer, peachy tone, while others have a cool, bluer undertone.



Beiges and off-whites also have subtle color in them. Compare paint colors to your fabrics and flooring to determine if a warm yellow beige, or a cool pinky beige is best. Obviously, for the yellow fabric pictured above, a yellow-toned off-white would be better for the walls than a pink or green-toned off-white.

Often a home center and hardware store will carry more than one brand of paint. Look at all of the choices and collect color cards of the possibilities for your project.

Before making any paint purchase take your paint chips outside the store (or at least next to a window) to see the colors in natural light. (You want good lighting, but not direct sunlight.) If the store has a lamp section you could also look at the colors under incandescent and fluorescent light. But the best idea may be to take the color chips home and view them in your own interior space, with the light sources you'll be using in your room.



Consult one of the handy online paint estimators to get an idea of how much paint you'll need for your project. Add the suggestions from your local paint store professional to come up with a final quantity, primer needs, etc.

Get paint advice from the experts, both online and in the store. Describe your project and what you are hoping to achieve with paint finish, paint type, and characteristics. Find out what paints they recommend, and why. Ask them for information on specialty paints such as low-odor, stain-killing primers, chalkboard paint, washable paint, and many more.



Always buy a pint of paint to do a test patch. It is excellent insurance for less than \$10.00. Paint a 12-48" square on a board or directly on your wall. Live with it for a day or two, observing it in all lighting conditions, and in combination with the room's flooring, wallcoverings, and fabric choices. If it isn't right, get another pint and try

again.

For the most accurate color representation, view paint colors vertically (up against the wall) and view carpet samples set flat on the floor.

Notice whether the color you're testing might be adversely affected by other colors in a room. For example, if your room is currently painted pink and your test patch is beige, it is likely that the pink will reflect onto the beige, changing the color. If no pink will be in the final room, try to view your test board in a neutral room if at all possible -- perhaps in an adjacent room with the same exposure and more neutral walls.



Paint color often looks different when wet than when it's dry. Don't panic when you first see the paint applied to the wall. Let it dry, then check it with your other samples (fabric, tiles, carpet) to decide if it looks right.

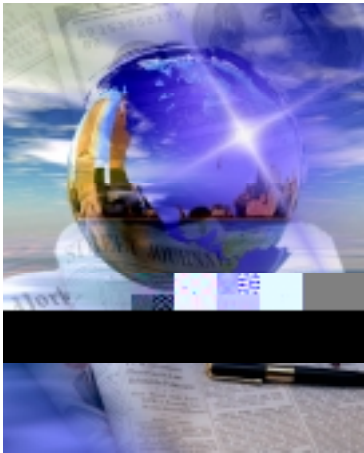
It never hurts to have some white paint. If your chosen color seems too dark you can use the white to lighten it a bit (or a lot). Or, use it to paint the ceiling, or to dilute your wall color for use on the ceiling. Just make sure you mix up enough of a color at one time to finish the project.

Finally, for a truly unique color, many paint stores offer custom color mixing which enable you to bring in a fabric swatch or other color reference, and have paint specially created to match. Call your local hardware and home center store to inquire.

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