



How to Pick the Right Paint Color

guide

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MEET YOUR *designer*



ALL ABOUT JULIE

I've been working with color and designs for over 20 years and let me tell you something...I see more paint color mistakes than ever these days! Why? Because not every color "gets along" and we have so many different and unique color and furnishing choices than ever before.

You see...it's not just about having the right paint color on walls...it's about how that color fits with your floors, trim, countertops, cabinets and furnishings. Creating a color perfect home is never done by accident! This guide will give you a great start!





How to Pick the Right Color Guide

Color is central to the emotion one feels when entering into a space. Color is visceral. In fact, each color is emotional, so when combined with the overall effect of a room it can have an amazing or devastating effect! Color can perform a multitude of roles and can affect a person's emotions, energy level, and sense of order, or disorder. Color also sets a tone in interiors and can make it seem formal or informal, masculine or feminine, coolly aloof or warm and welcoming. The goal for you is to successfully control these effects through the expert use of color as a design tool itself.

OBJECTIVES

After completing this Color Guide you will be able to:

- Understand the language and attributes of color
- Identify ideal color combinations and schemes
- Understand how light and architecture affects color while practically assessing the temperature of each room
- Understand and identify the meaning and emotion of each color for practical use
- Understand color ratios and various color cues in your home and how to use them for inspiration
- Find your perfect color scheme and direct your other color finish and furnishing choices based on that.

Did you know there are over 6 million colors discernible to the human eye? What an amazing concept! Sometimes it's good to go back to the basics for everything to "click" again. The color wheel is something we've all seen but do we truly understand how to use it? I know most of you want to throw the color wheel in the trash and just move on, but the science of color plays an important part in the way we choose color for our rooms. To develop the skill and confidence to create a room that peaceful but not boring, or vibrant but not garish, you need a good color vocabulary.



ATTRIBUTES OF COLOR

HUE

The first attribute of color is hue, which is a fancy way to say the name of a color. Hue is just another word for color. The color wheel is used to represent the basic colors (hues) of the visible spectrum. All of these colors are of full intensity and the wheel is most commonly made up of 12 color gradations, even though there are actually a myriad number of color gradations possible between each color on the wheel.



The three primary colors; yellow, red and blue are completely pure. When combined, they are the basis for every color in the spectrum. Secondary colors are created by mixing two of the primary colors and orange, green and violet make up this threesome. Tertiary colors are created by combining either all three primary colors or one primary and one secondary color.

VALUE OR LIGHTNESS

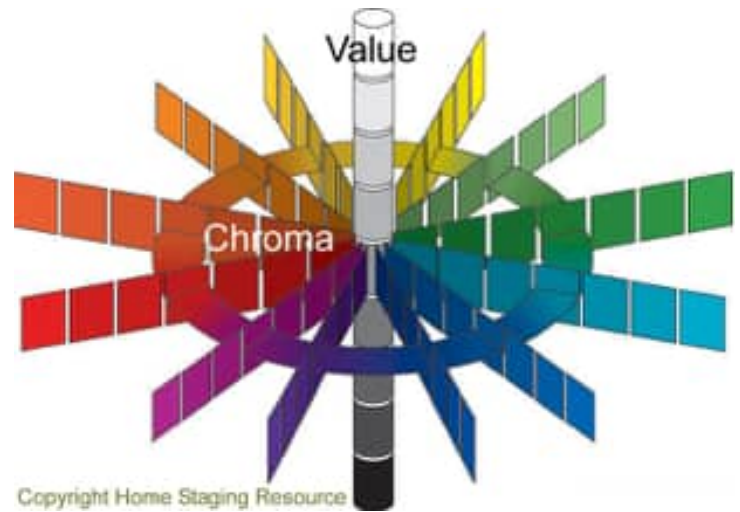
The second attribute of color is value, or the relative lightness or darkness of a color. Lighter values are created by adding **white** to a color, and darker values result from adding **black**. Of course, there are infinite variations in value, from the lightest lights to the darkest darks. Baby blue, for example, is a light value of blue. Navy is a dark value of blue. If you look at the color ring, you'll notice that each pure color has a natural value; that is, yellow is naturally light, while violet is naturally dark.

Light-value colors are pale versions of the pure hues. Pink is a light value of red. Peach is a light value of orange and mint is a light value of green. Medium-value colors are midway on the scale of light to dark. Dark-value colors are simply darker versions of pure hues.

CHROMA, INTENSITY OR SATURATION

The third attribute of color is chroma, intensity or saturation, the relative purity or intensity of a color determined by how much or how little gray is added to the color. The value of the colors on a chroma scale does not change; only the intensity of the color varies.

If your eyes are beginning to glaze over, here is a helpful color wheel that clearly displays all three attributes and how they relate to one another.



Artists refer to light, medium, and dark values as tints, tones and shades. Confusion arises because we often use these terms indiscriminately to describe certain colors—"a shade of blue" or "red tones," for example. The reality is that all of these terms refer to a full intensity or chroma hue mixed with white, black, or some value of gray. Mixing with a white value creates a tint (pastels), mixing with a black value produces a shade, and combining some value of gray (chroma) with another color creates a tone. Here is a visual example:



COLOR TEMPERATURE

Colors are often referred to as either warm or cool. If you draw an imaginary line on the color ring below from red violet to yellow-green, the colors to the right - yellow, reds, and oranges - seem warm. Warm colors are considered to be “advancing” because they seem as though they are coming closer to the viewer. On walls, warm colors can make a room feel cozy and enveloping. Warm colors stand out to the eye and act as energy boosters. (Think of the vivid colors of a sunset.) They’re stimulating, exciting, and fiery, and are perfect for social spaces like living rooms, dining rooms, and kitchens to promote conversation.

The colors to the left of that imaginary line on the color ring - greens, blues, and violets - are the cool hues. They appear to be farther away, which is why they are called “receding” colors. On walls, cool colors can make a room feel spacious and calm and are soothing at their core. (Think of a calm blue Caribbean sea). Because of their focusing power, cool colors are best for quiet spaces like bedrooms, offices, nurseries, and bathrooms. These shades are ideal for promoting deep and pensive thought. We’ll delve more into colors and moods in a bit but I want you to notice the distinct personality differences between the temperature of a color.



note:

Visual temperature is relative. Red-violet and yellow-green may seem warm or cool, depending on the presence of other colors. Next to orange, red-violet looks cool, so the relationship of colors next to one another plays into temperature as well.

COLOR COMBINATIONS OR SCHEMES

Now that you've studied the three-dimensional attributes of color, as well as their individual temperature, let's put them together for a harmonious effect. Color combinations or schemes come from classic color theory (yes, we're harkening back to the color wheel), and they work just as well in decorating as in fine art.

Combining colors is not difficult, provided you learn a few basic principles. As with any other decorative technique, it is best to begin simply, with some tried and tested combinations. Later on, as your understanding of color grows, you may want to add a few twists of your own, or try out some more unconventional schemes and I'll talk about the nature of creating a harmonious scheme at the end of this section.

MONOTONE COLOR SCHEMES

A monotone color scheme consists of various tints or shades of a single neutral color such as gray, beige, or cream. This type of color scheme is a safe and conservative approach to interior color design. It is also very effective when a variety of natural materials and textures are incorporated in the interior, as this allows these materials to take center stage.

We touched upon the different neutral colors already, so imagine combining varying values to a neutral to achieve a conservative foolproof approach as in the photo below:



Tip

When it comes to expensive large, expensive, fixed finishes or furnishings (like your sofa), I recommend going neutral (making sure the the undertones of the neutral are not pink). Choosing a cream or white couch will allow you to add varying punches of color with pillows over the years without tiring of the look.

MONOCHROMATIC COLOR SCHEMES

Monochromatic or single-color schemes consist of variations of a single color or hue usually mixed with a neutral. The Monochromatic is different from the monotone scheme, in that the color in question can be a chroma scale of any color or hue (not just neutrals). This kind of scheme can be very dramatic but should be used judiciously because it can appear overpowering. The safest approach to monochromatic schemes is to use medium to light values of a color which are slightly grayed down. There's nothing quite like an all blue bedroom!



Where to Use a Monochromatic Scheme

- A classically inspired room, in either a traditional or modern setting, will suit a monochromatic scheme well as in the picture to the left.
- A traditional room would be well served by this scheme combined with traditional fabrics and antique pieces of furniture. Cushions, pillows and throws can introduce small amounts of pattern.
- To provide an undemanding background to a central feature within a room. If you have a patterned couch or detailed and ornate fireplace.
- A contemporary or minimalist setting will suit a single-color scheme. It will act as a simple backdrop to modern pieces of furniture and decorative art. Make sure to add textural interest with fur, knits and organic material.
- To increase the impression of space. A monochromatic scheme in a receding color will supply a room with an expansive atmosphere and the illusion of space.

COMPLEMENTARY COLOR SCHEME

A complementary color scheme combines colors directly across from each other on the color wheel. When you take red and green for instance, you are creating a contrasting or complementary scheme because they are polar opposites on the color wheel. In color as in love, embracing the adage “opposites attract” can be the start of a beautiful relationship, or at least color scheme. These dynamic duos create stimulating, high energy spaces. When you choose complimentary colors on the wheel, including red and green, blue and orange, and yellow and purple, the warm and cool hues play off each other, producing palettes that enjoy the best of both worlds. Remember, because they are opposite in temperature, they intensify each other!

Complementary Blue and Orange of the Similar Value



Danger:

Complementary color schemes are often the most striking and lively yet the most difficult to execute well because the misjudgment in color selection can cause the scheme to be too jarring. Study successful examples of complementary color schemes to understand what works and what doesn't.

Tip:

Use one color primarily while using the other color in a supporting role. We'll go over color proportions later but in a complimentary scheme, you'll want one color to be 60% or 30% while the contrasting color 10% in the form of accents (use neutral tones for the other portion of 60% or 30%. For example, the room below incorporates green as 30%, red as the 10% accent color and neutral beige as the 60% proportion.



Tip:

Don't limit your complementary scheme to colors strictly across from each other on the wheel when you can travel one over and get an equally fantastic result. This is called a split complement. For instance, blue works very well with yellow which is one color over from orange which can be a bit harsh with blue. When you combine complementary colors, feel free to wander around the ring a bit. The effect is still harmonious. .

ANALOGOUS SCHEMES

Analogous or sometimes termed harmonious schemes consist of colors that lie side by side on the color ring or are on one side of the ring. Red, red orange, and orange are analogous (or related), and so are blue, blue-green, and green. This decorative style is easy to live with and restful. So versatile is this type of scheme, in fact, that it is suitable for every room in the house and most, if not all, age groups.

Blues and greens, pink and violets, and yellows and oranges are all analogous or harmonious combinations. These partnerships do not limit you purely to two colors, of course. This type of color scheme does not fall in to warm and cool color categories alone, as the sections where these colors meet on the color wheel can also be the basis of a successful scheme. Blue, green and yellow are an analogous combination as seen below:



Where to Use a Analogous or Harmonious Scheme

- A small room benefits from a harmonious scheme consisting of cool colors in order to give the room a spacious feel.
- A large room designed for family relaxation will suit a harmonious scheme based around warm colors on the wheel.
- Similar to a cool monochromatic scheme, a cool analogous scheme in a room where you want to emphasize texture, rather than color, creates a subtle back drop.

Tip:

Complementary color schemes are more formal in feeling than analogous schemes, which tend to be more restful. Use complementary schemes in medium to light values in the formal area of the home, such as the living room or dining room. Save analogous schemes for family rooms and bedrooms, where respite is needed.

COMPLEX COMBINATIONS – TRIADS AND TETRADS

Complex schemes consist of colors placed around the color ring in a variety of arrangements from each other. A three color combination, equidistant on the wheel is called a triad. A four color combination consisting of two sets of complementary colors, blue, orange, red and green is a tetrad. Tetrads are very difficult to master.

Going back to our wheel below, you can see that the primary colors of yellow, blue and red are a triad. You can visually spin the triangle around to find the many triad color schemes available.



Complex color schemes are pleasing because they automatically balance visual temperature. To help you imagine these combinations, you might try isolating the colors on the wheel while covering the other colors.

Hands On Exercise :

On the wheel above, cover all the colors except orange, green, and violet. Now you can imagine how those would work in various values and tones.

While there are specific tried and true color combinations that always work well, the perfect color combinations always share some common traits or attributes. Remember that colors have three attributes:

1. Hue or Color
2. Value or Lightness
3. Chroma or Saturation

Maintaining some similarities between colors ensures that they relate to each other and are thereby harmonious. Once a harmonious base color combination is established, you can add dramatic accents to enliven the color scheme and prevent it from being boring.

COLOR WITH RESPECT TO LIGHT

COLOR AND LIGHT

Color is a phenomenon of light and the way it reflects the color not absorbed onto the object back to us. We perceive color due to the pigments in a given object and its light reflection.

Have you ever tried to match a color swatch in a store only to find it looks like a completely different color when you bring it home and put it on a wall? Your “go to” colors will not work in all spaces because lighting GREATLY effects the appearance of color. This experience is called metamerism, and is when colors change when viewed under different light sources. The color beige that real estate agents are so fond of using in staged homes particularly falls prey to this phenomenon. Other colors more prone to change are taupe, grays, grayed-blues, mauves, lilacs and my personal favorite yellows.

Danger:

For this very reason, it is always CRITICAL that you test the colors on a 2 foot by 2 foot portion of the wall of better yet piece of primed drywall first, watch the color all day long and then decide whether you can live with it.

Do not put the test colors next to each other on the wall and make sure to place the colors in the area of the room that best represents the typical lighting in the space! Better yet, test the color in different lighting throughout the room.

Hands On Exercise

Walk around your home and view your northern facing rooms vs. your southern facing rooms. I don't know about you, but I struggle with “warming up” my northern rooms while my southern rooms have no trouble.

ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING CONSIDERATIONS

Just changing the types of bulbs in any household fixtures can make a major difference in the way the room looks, functions, and feels. Light is like paint. You get different effects depending on the combinations you use. And color is nothing but the reflection of different types of light. That's why when planning lighting and color schemes, always consider the relationship between color and light.

Most homes include a combination of warm and cool tones, so selecting bulbs that provide balanced lighting comfortably close to what appears normal to the eye is usually the most attractive choice.

Hands On Exercise

Experiment with various combinations of bulbs to create your own desired effect. Balance and layering are key to good lighting and thus enhancement of color choices.

Note:

It's important to not only note the color but the temperature of the fixed item in order to best match with like temperatures.



This north facing hallway's warm temperature tile clashed with the cool gray of the original wall color for a stark, dull look. By adding a matching warm wheat color to the walls, the hall and floor visibly warmed up.

COLOR WITH RESPECT TO ARCHITECTURE

COLOR AND SPACE

Similar to the color and light phenomenon, color can affect space in many different ways:

1. Color can set the emotional tone or ambiance of a space
2. Color can help to focus or divert attention (especially in staging homes)
3. Color can modulate the space to make it feel larger or smaller
4. Color can help to break up and define space
5. Color can unify a space

Here are some pictorial examples of the above roles color can play in respect to architectural space:



The darker value of blue (navy) and white combination renders a very formal and cozy feel to this sitting room.

The light value of blue (baby blue) in this bedroom gives it a spacious, tranquil and relaxed feel.



FOCUSING OR DIVERTING ATTENTION



The attention is focused on the colorful tapestry complemented by the rhythmic pillows.

Attention is diverted from the size of the diminutive size of the room and the tapestry creates a lengthening effect to the walls by diverting our eyes upward.

MODULATING SPACE TO FEEL LARGER OR SMALLER



Vertical color striping in a small bedroom helps to elongate the wall and make it feel larger. The light color scheme also helps this space.



This oversized master bedroom is made to feel cozy and small through the use of complementary, darker shades of green, red and brown.

COLOR WITH RESPECT TO MEANING AND EMOTION

COLOR AND MOOD

Color is a powerful tool for creating mood, whether it is the purity of whites, the elegance of earth tones, the calm of a pale blue, the freshness of greens and yellows, or the opulence of deep reds and purples. Of course, it is not just a simple matter of using one color to create an atmosphere, but of selecting a palette or combination of colors for the feeling you want to create, and using these in varying proportions for the different surfaces and elements in the room.

In our own homes, creating mood and invoking emotion is critical, so the color palette we choose sets the tone for this. This is why I'm not a big fan of all beige in a space because as home owners, we are missing out on the benefits of color, mood and emotion if we neglect to use any color! Consider pops of color with your pillows or furnishings if you choose a beige wall color to liven the space up like in the bedroom below:



Active colors are on the warm side of the color wheel and include yellow, orange and red. Extroverts, these advancing hues step out into the room to greet and energize, but they sometimes dominate. They inspire conversation and an upbeat attitude. Beware: Active colors can be too energetic for bedrooms, where a restful mood is needed.

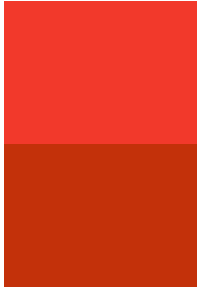
Passive colors are cool colors such as blue, green and purple. Pacifying, staying quietly in the background to calm and restore depleted spirits. They're ideal for bedrooms and baths but for those in colder, northern climates may seem a bit too cool.

Neutral colors like white, black, gray, browns, beiges and taupe, neither energize nor pacify but combine and cooperate. Consider these colors in your combinations as bridges, bringing together different rooms and colors. They make good transitions on woodwork and trim and in hallways. Darker neutrals tone down other colors; crisp white intensifies them.

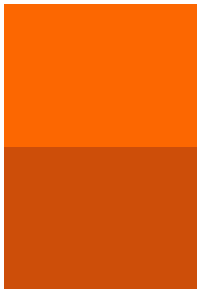
Let's take a look at each color individually. The following page makes an excellent color and meaning cheat sheet for you to consider which mood or emotion you want to evoke in each space of your home.



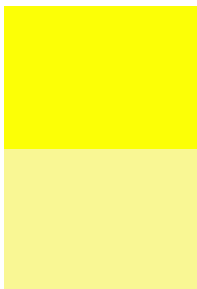
COLOR, MEANING AND EMOTION



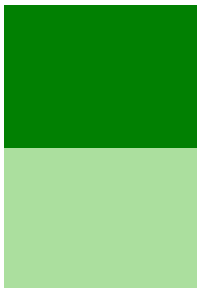
Red pumps the adrenaline like no other color and it's no wonder that it stimulates the appetite...can anyone say red dining room? In fact, red is so strong and tiring for the eyes, surgeons wear baby blue scrubs as an eye respite while working on the inside of the human body which is blood red. Deep reds have a traditional feeling of importance and stature, and bright reds impart adventure. Brick red has an earthier feel and provides a classic, warm, understated look while cherry red symbolizes romance and energy. Either way, red will attract the most attention, and is why red is a great distracter in staging!



Orange is the color of enthusiasm, creativity, warmth and conjures up images of fast food and advertising. Orange can range from bright yellow-oranges to deep terra-cotta and rust. Few use orange "as is" in large quantities, but orange is the source of many more workable hues. Rich oranges can be copper or paprika, which remarkably share the warmth of an earth tone and can be comforting and warm. Pale peach is a lovely, light accent.

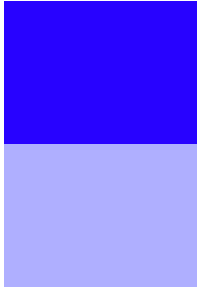


Yellow is welcoming, sunny, bright and enthusiastic. There's nothing like yellow to lift the spirits and lighten the mood. Bold yellows and formal gold demand equally intense color companions, such as royal blue and crimson red. Bright yellows have a vibrating intensity that can be difficult on the eyes and are not suggested in young children's rooms. Soft yellows with names like wheat, maize and taffy, are ideally suited to walls and furnishings, where stronger colors might overwhelm. Coordinating with almost any other color, soft yellows are easy to live with.

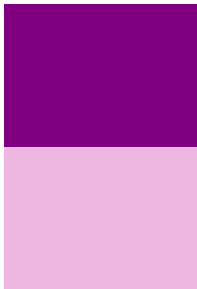


Green represents nature and can be tranquil and invigorating, as well as restful and balancing. Relaxing and soothing, green is used in places where people are comforted, whether it is a medical facility or a "green room" where people relax before a performance. Dark greens inspire a more conservative, traditional environment. Lighter soft greens recall nature and soothing earth tones and look at home in almost any scheme, especially one that includes warm wood. Green is considered the fourth primary as it works well with almost any color.

COLOR, MEANING AND EMOTION



Blues are connected to both sky and water, and they are associated with clear thinking and calm, meditative environments (think surgeon's blue scrubs). Blue also invokes the qualities of loyalty, honesty and clarity. Blue is a relatively broad color family including hues as varied as cornflower, cobalt and cerulean. Bright, breezy blues please children, while less intense versions satisfy more sophisticated tastes. The coolest color on the wheel, it generally produces tranquil feelings and peaceful moods. Blue is a favorite bedroom color!



Purple brings to mind luxury, wealth, sophistication, mystery, romance and royalty. This mix of emotions is common as some people view it as magical and mysterious, while others as dark and dreary associated with the Victorian era. Rich purples can be used in rooms of quiet elegance and can convey a formal look in combination with cream, gray, and black. Soft purples like lilac and lavender can be more feminine and create a feeling of splendor, style and light-hearted romance. The light hues go particularly well in bedrooms or children's rooms where the mood is cooling, romantic or whimsical.

Neutral colors like white (purity and freshness), black (understated elegance, power and strength) and brown (stability, security and comfort) work wonders in any color scheme.



PROPORTIONS OF COLOR

As a general rule in designing colors for interiors, it is prudent to use the strongest or most dominant colors in the smallest amounts, otherwise, they tend to overpower the space and actually can become oppressive. This is especially true when it comes to choosing color combinations for staging! When stronger colors are used in smaller amounts they function as accents and serve to enliven the more muted or neutral colors.

THE 60-30-10 RULE

In general, the dominant color covers 60 percent of a room (for instance walls), the secondary color composes 30 percent of the space (such as window treatments and furnishings), and accent colors make up the remaining 10 percent (artwork, pillows and so forth). Although you don't need to follow this formula exactly, these recommended percentages will help you determine how much of each color should be used to build a successful color scheme while creating rhythm in a space.

Why 60-30-10? Because the 60 percent unifies the coloration, the 30 percent provides visual interest and the 10 percent provides the spark. When you think about it, this scheme is very similar to a man's suit or the way we typically dress professionally. Speaking of the way we dress, consider looking into your closet for inspiration on the kinds of colors you are drawn to the most. Do you play it safe with mostly black, white and beige? Do you have a color that soothes you in your closet or one you wear for spark?

MY NO-FAIL COLOR SYSTEM

Now that you understand the basics of color, it's relationship of in a space in terms of lighting and architecture, as well as color ratios...you can now take a hard look at your own home and plan a palette that works perfectly for you!

You can make an extra 10K according to a Zillow study of over 32,000 homes by choosing the correct colors in different spaces of your home!

If you still need help I'm happy to help. In our Color Consultation we use a 6-Step Color Read process, to determine the ideal types of color to use in each space based on what you already have in the room, so that you don't run into color conflicts.

GOT QUESTIONS?

Color is complicated and there's no "one-color-fits-all" but I can help since color is my jam! If you want me to come by and give you the paint colors that will look best within your space, simply click on the link below to make an appointment. I'm here for you!

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