

# Choosing the Right Paint Colour

Choosing paint colour is not necessarily as easy as you might think – and if you get it wrong, you are stuck with it for a few years, or a hefty bill to have a new colour applied.

Some things to bear in mind include:

- What looks good on a colour swatch (also referred to a chip) might be overbearing when viewed as an entire wall;
- Colour can change under differing conditions, e.g. the type of artificial light used, time of day, shadows, etc.
- Your final choice of colour(s) can depend on the orientation of your home and/or its situation with regard to its surroundings, e.g. if it has trees right next to it, whether it lies in the shadow of a mountain at certain times of the day, and so on.

So... where to begin?

The first port of call should be your local Mica and its paints department.

Warm or cool?

Colours are often referred to as warm or cool. Earthy colours, such as orange, red and pink are referred to as warm colours, whereas shades of blues, greens and violet are referred to as cool. So, depending on the orientation and design of your home, you might consider warm colours for rooms on the south-facing side of your home, and ‘cool’ colours for those on the north-facing side.

The influence of fabrics and furnishings

Furnishings, such as carpeting, lounge suites, beds and bedding can influence the final effect of any paint job, either complementing the walls and ceiling or not. Take these influencers into account when making your colour selection.

Remember that white is not always white

Trying to find the perfect white might not be as simple as you think because off-whites and beiges, often the choice for door and window trim, have subtle colour. A further consideration is whether your CFL lights are a cool white or warm white as this too can influence the final results, either accentuating an off-white’s subtle colour hue, or muting it. Always compare paint swatches to your fabrics and flooring to determine whether a warmer white or a cooler white is

best for your room, and ensure that you do it under different conditions – in natural light, with the lights on, lights off and at dusk, etc.

This is a bit rough... let's not gloss over it

Another factor is the surface texture. Most interior walls in a home are smooth, and some exteriors are rougher with a textured finish. You should also bear in mind that whether a paint is matt, suede or gloss can also affect the final result.

Strip search

A quick glance at a swatch and you will see a range of shades of the same basic colour and how they work together. So while you might select a very different colour for the rim, for instance, you might also consider using a different hue of the same basic colour. A good idea is to get a few examples of the same swatch you have selected and then cut out the same first and/or second choices and stick them closely together (one colour per sheet) to a sheet of paper. (If you have selected two or more then stick them on to two or more) so that all the 'Autumn Blush' will be on one sheet, all the 'Super Summer' will be on the other sheet, and so on. Why? Because the bigger your sample sheet for comparison and selection the better.

Make a note of that

Walls and furniture get dirty over time, or the paint fades and you feel like repainting – the problem is that for the life of you, you simply cannot remember the name or even the manufacturer of the colour you used five years ago. Problem solved... When painting a room, for instance, you will usually remove the light switch cover, amongst other fittings. Use a permanent marker to write down the manufacturer/s, the colour/s and the lot number/s of the various paints used. In five or ten years' time, you simply remove the switch cover and all the information you need is there. If the specific paint/s you need are no longer manufactured, you can supply the manufacturer with the relevant information... which is why the lot number is a vital piece of the puzzle... paint manufacturers keep complete and accurate records of every paint they make, and often the paints are made in 'lots' – batches. Each formulation is individually numbered so when you ask for some more, you should be able to reproduce exactly the same colour.

Custom colours

If you want to achieve a perfect match or find a truly unique colour, your local Mica will usually offer custom colour mixing. This makes it possible to bring in a fabric swatch, painting or other colour reference, and have a paint colour created to be a perfect match.

Look up

Light colours are usually best for a ceiling, because it is always in shadow and white is a good reflector of the light from your ceiling light fittings. Pure white is therefore a good choice, but if you want the ceiling to match the walls, select a ceiling paint one or two shades lighter than the walls, or dilute your wall colour with white in a ratio of 25% colour to 75% white and use that for the ceiling.

On the up, on the flat

To get the most accurate impression of a colour, check it in the plane in which it will be applied. Hold the swatch against the wall, and the one for the ceiling against the ceiling so that you see it in the right light. In passing, the same applies to carpets ... view samples on the floor, not in your lap.

Complementary colours

Complementary colours are any two colours that are directly opposite each other. As you will see from the colour wheel published with this article, complementary colours are, for example, purple-yellow, red-green, dark orange-light blue, and so on.

Bearing in mind that the colours in the colour wheel are raw – 100% saturation – but probably in the majority of cases, the hues you select, even though they are complementary, will be far more subdued.

An example of a colour wheel. Each colour in the wheel is complementary to that opposite it.

This is a light earthy tone called ‘Namib’, which gives a warm effect, even when in full shadow, as here.

This is a far darker earth tone; the original wall colour is just visible on the lower right-hand corner. The white area is the new undercoat.