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COLOR ME PERFECT

Tips on choosing the right paint for you

BY AMY SMITH

What better way to update your space than with a fresh coat of paint? This is one of the simplest and most cost-effective ways to transform an interior. While it may seem quite simple, there are a few details that should be thought through before you make a trip to the hardware store.

Once a coat of paint is applied to a surface, a common response is, "Is that really the color I selected?" There are many factors to consider, and it is best to allow ample time when making these decisions.

The best place to start, as it is with most design-related decisions, is to take inventory of existing elements. It is easy to get caught up in color trends, but make sure you are selecting colors that coordinate with your existing belongings. For example, grey is popular right now, and many people want to introduce the color in their homes. It can be a versatile neutral as long as the proper shade is selected, but choosing a cool grey when warm colors are prominent in the adjacent spaces — and vice versa — can be displeasing to the eye.

Never make a selection in the store without looking at a sample in your home, as the lighting in the store is most likely very different than the lighting in your home. Once you have narrowed down your selections, purchase a sample pot so that you can see a larger swatch. If you are not yet committed to painting, paint a piece of poster board and, once it dries, hang it up on the wall. This will provide a more realistic representation of what the color will look like in your space without the commitment of painting. Always allow paint to dry completely, as it can significantly affect the color. Analyze the color over the next few days. Check in at various times of the day as the color will look different depending on the natural light. Are you as happy with your selection on a cloudy day as you were when it was bright and sunny?

If you are considering an accent wall, make sure the accent color offers enough contrast to the wall color used throughout the rest of the space. Some people are afraid of creating too much of a contrast, which often results in selecting a color that is too close to the primary color in the room. It then appears that the entire room is the same hue. Choose your accent wall wisely, and if there is a wall that is already a focal point, emphasize this wall. It is never a good idea to create more than



This Lafayette home features three neutral paint colors in two different sheens to create contrast and accent the fireplace and built-in bookshelves. AMY SMITH

one focal point in a room. For example, if your living room has a fireplace, this is generally the wall that would be painted an accent color. If you choose another wall it can break up the space and create more than one focal point, which creates confusion instead of cohesion.

After you have selected a color it is now time to decide on a sheen. A common rule of thumb is to paint the trim in a higher sheen than the walls. I often recommend that clients paint the walls in an eggshell and the trim in a satin. It would be completely appropriate to use a flat paint on the walls if you prefer less shine or a semi-gloss on the trim if you prefer a glossier finish. An eggshell offers just enough of a sheen. It is easy to wipe down when cleaning but does not highlight imperfections the way a paint with a higher sheen can often do when used on walls.

Last but not least, do not forget about the ceiling. This often is overlooked and painted a bright white but can actually have a huge impact on the feel of the space. Sometimes a bright white can be a little harsh. Most paint manufacturers offer a white paint that is created specifically for ceilings. It has a miniscule amount of color added to it, which creates a softness that is not always found in a factory-mixed white.

Before you begin painting, consider the color of your wall, ceiling, trim and surrounding elements, as well as the desired sheen. When all of the questions are answered before work begins, you reduce the risk of rushing into a decision. Color affects everyone differently and can strongly influence mood and productivity. If you are not confident in your ability to visualize the impact a color change will have on your space, reach out to a professional. Most importantly, have fun! Enjoy the process and take pleasure in your newly improved space.

Amy Smith is an interior designer at Stephan Design, Inc., where she spends her days designing residential and business interiors. Smith obtained a bachelor of arts in interior design from Purdue University and continues her education to bring the most innovative product and design solutions to the Greater Lafayette area. Submit questions, comments and design-related topics to info@stephandesignstudio.com.

