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# THE ALL-IN-ONE GUIDE TO DECORATING WITH COLOR

*Master the Use of Decorating with Color in Your Home*



# INTRODUCTION

All too often, we choose to not put much thought into the use of color in our homes simply because the idea seems so daunting. How many times have you looked at a room and thought how nice it would be to paint your walls something besides a drab white or beige? How many times have you seen a beautifully decorated and color complementing room on television and wanted the same for your own home?

Often, it is easy to just give up and think that only professional decorators can truly make use of color in a home or room. However, this is not true. It only takes a little knowledge and study to learn about color and how to use it in your home. You do not have to be a professional interior designer to have a house that looks like it came from a magazine. In fact, you do not even have to spend hours studying to learn how to make use of color.

If you want to redecorate your home and make use of color to create a living space that you truly love, then you have come to the right place. The following guide will explain color theory in a way that is easy to understand. It will also help you get a plan of action together so that you can get started in your home. This includes everything you need to know about how to redecorate your home with color.



# COLOR THEORY

Many people hear the term “color theory” and they are immediately intimidated. It sounds like a collegiate term that only artists and interior decorators know about. It is true that color theory can be fairly in depth and confusing. However, with a little explanation and understanding, you can consider yourself well-schooled in practicing the basics of color theory.

It is important to understand color theory since it will play an important role in how you make use of color in your home. These practices can help you learn what colors complement each other and which ones clash. By understanding this in advance, you can avoid repainting later.

To start with, you will want to know a little about the color wheel. This wheel explains how colors work together and how they mix to create new colors. If you are unfamiliar with the color wheel, then here is what you need to know.

There are three colors that are considered primary. These are the colors that mix together to create all other colors. The three primary colors are red, blue, and yellow. On the color wheel, they each touch the other. Secondary colors are the colors that are created from the mixing where the primary colors touch. Red and blue mix to create purple. Blue and yellow mix to create green, and yellow and red mix to create orange. A third set of colors are called tertiary. These colors come from mixing one primary color with one secondary color. For example, purple and red will create fuchsia. Blue and green will mix to create aquamarine.

Now that you have a better understanding of how the color wheel works, you must be wondering how you make use of it. This is where color theory begins to play a major role. When you want to make use of color in a room, you can use the color wheel to choose complementing colors to create a palette that will be appealing. The primary colors are the boldest and should only be used in small amounts so that they do not overwhelm a space. When you look at the color wheel, secondary and tertiary colors will work well with their complementing colors or ones that connect to them on the wheel.

The color wheel itself is actually only the beginning of the theory of color. After all, the color wheel only includes the different hues of color. If you are unfamiliar with hue, never fear. This section will be followed by a glossary of terms to help you better understand theory. You will also want to learn about tint and shade when choosing the right colors for a room. Often, you will find that the best way to decorate a room will be to choose a certain hue and then use varying tints and shades to create a depth within the room.

Let us consider the hue of blue for a moment. If you want to decorate a room in the color blue, you will not want to have everything in the room the exact same blue. Otherwise, you will find that the room is plain, flat, and a little overwhelming. Instead, you will want to find different shades of blue that work well together. You will also want to add in a few pieces in a complementing hue like green or yellow in order to break up the blues of the space.

Another part of color theory depends more upon the psychology of color. This may be a totally new concept to you, but it has been put into practice for ages. There are certain colors that have been proven to affect the mood of a person when they are surrounded by that color. For instance, blue is known to be calming. Yellow is known to bring a bright, happy feel. Red can bring on emotions. By understanding this, you can better consider what colors you want to use in a given room. You would not exactly want to make use of many reds in a bathroom or a bedroom where you want to create a relaxing atmosphere!

Finally, you will want to know the difference between warm and cool shades since you will not want to use the two together. Warm colors include reds and yellows while cool colors include blues and greens. Of course this also covers all the shades, tones and hues in between. Anything with an orange, red, pink, yellow, or brown tone will be considered warm. Anything with a blue, green, aqua, teal, or grey shade will be considered cool tones. In most cases, you will want to choose only warm or only cool tones for a given room.

## TERMS AND DEFINITIONS TO KNOW

Now that you have a better knowledge of color theory itself, you may have found some of the terms and phrases above a little confusing; especially if you are brand new to color theory. Here is a glossary of those terms and phrases so that you can better understand them when you get ready to begin decorating with color.

### HUE

This is the term for one color. A hue will be the actual color like red, blue, yellow, purple, green, orange. A hue is any one of the colors that can be found on the color wheel as primary, secondary, or tertiary

### TINT

A tint is when a hue is combined with white to create a lighter color. Tints are usually softer and more pleasing to the eye than a hue. Examples of tints would include pink, baby blue, or lime green.

### SHADE

A shade is, in effect, the opposite of a tint. A shade is created when a hue is combined with black to create a darker color. Again, shades tend to be more soft and more pleasing to the eye than hues. Examples of shades would include burgundy, navy blue, or forest green.

### tone

This simply refers to just how light or dark a color is made through tint or shade. There can be thousands of combinations to create different tones of color, and you will see this when you begin viewing paint samples.

## SATURATION

This term describes just how intense a color is. For example, the color black would be fully saturated while shades of gray leading to white would provide different levels of saturation. This can be done with any colors on the color wheel.

## PRIMARY COLORS

There are three primary colors. They are red, yellow, and blue. All other colors are created from combinations of these three colors. Black is created from a combination of all three colors and white is the absence of color altogether.

## SECONDARY COLORS

There are three secondary colors. These are created with equal combinations of the three primary colors. They include purple, green, and orange.

## TERTIARY COLORS

These colors are created from an equal parts combination between one primary and one secondary color. There are six tertiary colors, including green-yellow, yellow-orange, orange-red, red-purple, purple-blue, and blue-green.

## COMPLEMENTARY COLORS

This is the definition of using two colors that actually appear opposite of each other on a color wheel. They are considered complementary in that they work well together to create a pleasing combination.

## TRIADIC COLORS

This would be making use of a total of three colors that are equally separated on the color wheel. This will create a bright and lively setting in a room, which is also referred to as a contrasting match.

## RELATED COLORS

These are colors that appear directly adjacent on the color wheel. If you want to create a harmonious or soothing for a room, then you would want to consider related colors since they create an overall softer feel.

## MONOCHROMATIC COLORS

This would be the use of colors that all fall under the same hue but with varying shades, tones, and intensities. This is another way to create a harmonizing or peaceful feel in a room. However, a completely monochromatic room without at least a touch of another color can actually feel boring or flat.

# PUTTING A COLOR PLAN TOGETHER

Before you ever begin to start redecorating your home with color, you need to set forth a plan. Otherwise, you may think you have a good feel for what colors will work the best for each room, you could run into major problems without a plan in place. For example, if you do not plan in advance you could find that you chose colors for adjoining rooms that do not flow together at all and actually look quite disjointed when put into use.

To start with, you will need a set of steps to follow when you get ready to start planning for color redecorating. The following steps are a good way to begin your plan. You may even want to print out these steps in order to make the whole process much easier and much more error free.

## **Step 1: Know Your Color Theory**

Of course, if you have been reading this guide in its entirety, you already have a good idea of what is involved in color theory. However, to put it into practice, you may want to invest in a color wheel. These are inexpensive and can be found at paint supply stores, home improvement stores, and art supplies stores. With a color wheel, you can actually put all that you learned about theory into practice.

Keep in mind that complementary colors are those that are opposite each other on that wheel. Harmonious colors are adjacent on the color wheel or one color apart.

## **Step 2: Start Shopping Around**

One of the best ways to choose colors for a room is to find a small item like a decorative object, a fabric, a pillow or a piece of art that you really like. You can shop around for these types of items and they will give you a basis for the rest of the room. It could be something as small as a tiny knickknack that gives you the ideas for color in your room. Once you have found such an item, you can use the colors in it to choose the right colors from the color wheel to go along with it.

Before you make any big purchases though, the best thing to do is to pick up color cards, fabric swatches and any other samples that interest you. Then, you can take all of them home with you and begin comparing them and making use of your color theory knowledge to begin putting together a plan.

## **Step 3: Keep Your Color Wheel with You All of the Time**

When you are out shopping around for color samples and swatches, it is best to have that color wheel with you. The reason for this is simple. If you have already decided a feel you want for the room like harmonious or lively, then you will want to consider the appropriate blend of colors. Most likely, you will not be able to remember this off the top of your head, but the color wheel can help you as a quick and easy reference.

## **Step 4: Know Your Scheme**

Again, before you make any major purchases, it is best to go ahead and know what color scheme you want to achieve. Use the glossary included earlier to decide on this. Of course, this will depend on your personal tastes, the room you are decorating, and what feel you would like to achieve. Whether you have decided you want a monochromatic, a triadic, or a complementary color scheme, it will be important to know this before you make any purchase for paint, fabrics, furnishings or décor.

### **Step 5: Purchase Paint**

This is when you will really begin delving into the actual process of redecorating your room. Once you have decided on a scheme and you have picked out the colors you want to use, you can start looking for paint. Since there are thousands of shades, tints, and intensities available in paint colors, do not rush this process. If you already have a fabric swatch or an item of the right color, then you may want to take it with you to the store in order to choose just the right paint.

Keep in mind that the paint on your walls will have a direct effect on the feel of the whole room. Darker paints will make a room feel smaller while lighter colors will open up a room. The more intense the color, the brighter and the more overwhelming a room will feel. You do not have to paint all the walls the same color. In fact an accent wall of a complementary color can add depth to a room. If you have a chair rail, you may want to further the depth of the color by using two paints, one above the chair rail, and one below.

Also, keep in mind that there are different textures to paint that will affect how the light reflects off the color. Here is a basic breakdown of paint types. Glossy paint has a smooth finish that is easy to wipe clean. Light reflects well off gloss paint and will create a lighter look. Semi-Gloss paint still retains some of the shine but in a toned down manner. Satin or Eggshell paint is a smooth finish with no shine. Colors on this paint will have a moderate intensity. Matte paint will feel more rough to the touch. It does not refract light at all and it will appear the darkest of the options.

### **Step 6: Lay Everything Out Before You Get Started**

Before you even open a can of paint, gather all of your materials and take them into the room that you are redecorating. This will be your last chance to go back and change some of the colors without much aggravation. Make sure that, in the light of that particular room, all of the colors you chose work well together. Make sure that you have not chosen too many intense colors for the space. This will also allow you the time to actually plan the process of choosing what to paint and where as well as what fabrics and décor to use and where.

These steps will make it much easier for you to get started redecorating with color. They are designed to help you with the shopping and planning process; however, you may still need help in deciding what colors to use in a room in the first place. After all, you need to begin somewhere and you may be feeling a little lost. Most of the choice for color to use in a room will be dependent on your personal taste. However, if you do not know right now what your personal taste may be, then you might want a little help.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself. Chances are, once you are done answering these questions, then you will have a much better idea of just what colors you want to begin with in the room that you are redecorating.

#### **What is the function of this room?**

You will definitely want to think about what room you are redecorating. Whether you are working on a kitchen, a living room, a bedroom, a bathroom, or some other space, this will play a role in your choices for the beginning color scheme. For example, you may want a lively and bright feel for a kitchen, so you may choose complementary or contrasting colors in warm tones. For bedrooms or bathrooms, you may want something soothing and harmonious, so you may choose colors that are related or monochromatic in cool tones.

Above all else, make sure that you use colors that you find appealing. After all, you are the one who will be living in the space.

### **What Mood Would You Like for the Room?**

As you learned in the color theory section, different colors can create different moods. Blues and greens tend to soothe, reds tend to bring emotion, yellows and oranges tend to bring liveliness. By choosing the right colors, you can directly affect the mood of the whole room.

Keep in mind that the mood you create now will be the mood that your room has unless you decide to redecorate your room again. Before you put that bright and cheery yellow on your bedroom walls, are you sure you will enjoy that feeling when you have had a hard day at work and you just want to relax for sleep? Carefully consider the mood you are creating before you pick a color for a room and remember that you need to be happy with it for a long time to come.

### **What Kind of Light Does the Room Receive?**

This is important because different colors will look differently depending on how much light exposure they receive. Carefully analyze how many windows are in the room, how much light will be allowed in, and how the artificial light will affect colors as well. You may want to alter lighting by choosing different drapes or curtains or by adding other artificial light sources. When you bring a color sample into the room, make sure you compare how it looks in the light of that room through the day.

### **Is the Room Large or Small? Do I Need it to Seem Larger or Smaller?**

As mentioned in the color theory section, you will want to think about how the colors you use will affect the feel of the room. For example, darker colors will create a smaller feel while brighter colors will make a room feel more large and open. If you have a small space, then you may want to choose lighter paint colors to avoid feeling cramped. If you have a large space, you may want to choose darker colors to create a cozy or intimate atmosphere.

After you have asked yourself the questions above, you will find it much easier to make the right decisions for the space you want to decorate. Do not be afraid to take plenty of time in the planning process. Here are a few more tips to get you started in planning your colors.

Look for color everywhere. You never know when a color or a scheme may catch your eye, and you never know what it may be in. You might see a color that you love in a piece of clothing, in a crayon box, in a flower or in someone else's home. When you are getting ready to redecorate with color, make sure that you are constantly on the lookout for colors that appeal to you.

Do not be afraid to ask for advice. If you are standing in the paint section of a home improvement store and you feel a little overwhelmed, speak with the attendant who is working there. Often, they will be able to give you advice on colors that will work well together. They may be able to point you in the right direction to find paint cards of particular colors that interest you.



Make sure you purchase supplies too. You may find yourself caught up in the process of choosing colors and you may forget about supplies. Remembering this in the first place will avoid aggravation and will save you time. You will need paint brushes and rollers. You will need painter's tape, newspapers, drop clothes, and paint stirrers. You may even wish to purchase a handheld paint can to hold small amounts as you work. Further, you might need a ladder or roller extender if your ceilings are high.

Do not forget to consider adjoining rooms. If your room is completely closed off by doors, then this may not be an issue. However, if the rooms meld together through a hallway or entry way then this consideration is very important. You do not want create a color scheme that clashes completely with the adjoining room or your whole house will feel disjointed. Unless you are redecorating the other room as well, then you need to consider the colors in it when choosing the colors for your redecoration project.

Do not forget texture. This can be especially important if you are creating a monochromatic color theme in the room. You will want to make sure you add some texture through paint types, fabrics, and décor items to keep the monochromatic theme from going from soothing to boring.

### **Experimenting with Color**

One thing that you will find when it comes to redecorating your home with color is that there are certainly plenty of rules that you can follow. However, we all know what they say about rules. Any rule is meant to be broken to some degree. Now, that is not to say that you should toss aside everything you have learned about the theory of color. Instead, you should take the basic principles and rules of the theory and then use them with your own imagination and creativity in order to come up with colors for the space that are perfect for your personality.

The most important thing to remember when you use your imagination to experiment with color, always take samples and swatches into the space that you are redecorating before you make a purchase and definitely before you put any paint on the walls. The more you experiment with color the more you want to make absolutely sure that the colors will work well with the lighting and the layout of the room.

There are many ways that you can experiment with color. Of course, it will be up to you to decide how you put these things into action. However, to get you started on thinking of ways to experiment with color in your home, here are some fun and exciting suggestions.

### **The Accent Wall**

Remember that you do not have to paint the whole room one color. Often, when you want to use a color that is bolder and brighter, it would be best to not do the whole room or it will feel overwhelming. However, this does not mean you cannot use that bold and bright color. The accent wall is a great way to still keep that color in the room without going overboard.

An accent wall is simply one wall or even a divider that is only a partial wall that you paint in a different color from the rest of the room as an accent. For example, the color red is almost always too bright for a whole room; however, you could paint the other walls a taupe or suede color and then one accent wall in a dark red. This would mean that when people walk in the room, they will first notice the beautiful red of your accent wall, yet they will not feel like they are overwhelmed by the color.

Another great use for an accent wall is as a way to display a favorite piece of artwork. Since people will notice this wall first, if you want them to see an artwork or a portrait, you can use the wall for that purpose, making it the focal point of the room.

### **The Chair Rail**

Many rooms, especially dining rooms, are separated by a chair rail. You can use this to your advantage to create a fun and interesting color palette. Choose a lighter color for above the chair rail and then a darker color for underneath. You can even use a textured paint for the bottom portion. Continuing with the idea of using reds, you could keep that in this scheme too.

For a dining room, one attractive palette would be to include a soft yellow for the top portion of the wall and a darker rust red for the bottom. This would again allow you to use the color red in the room without making it overwhelming.

If you do not have a chair rail, never fear. It is quite simple to install one. All you will need are the decorative wood railings that you can purchase from any home improvement store and a saw that will allow you to cut at angles so that you can fit the rail to the corners.

### **The Monochromatic Room**

Many people associate monochrome with boring, but this does not have to be the case. In fact, a room that is done in monochromatic colors can be soothing and tranquil. This is a perfect option for a bedroom or a bathroom. In order to make it soothing but not boring, you will need to experiment with different shades of the color you choose.

Consider the color blue for instance. If you choose a soft or light blue for the walls and then accent the room with darker blue and navy fabrics, you can create a monochrome color scheme without boredom.

If you truly want to experiment, then buy two gallons of paint in the exact same color. Just make sure one gallon is eggshell or matte finish and the other is gloss finish. Then, create wide vertical stripes on your wall with painter's tape. Alternate the two paint finishes. When dry, you will have a subtle style difference that will remain monochrome but will be pleasing to the eye.

Another way to make a monochrome color scheme interesting is to pick one accent piece in a totally different and totally bold color. The piece does not have to be big. It could be something as small as a vase or an accent pillow. However, this one pop of bright color in a monochrome scheme will make the room quite interesting.

### **The Ceiling**

All too many times, the ceiling is forgotten about when color redecorating is completed. Of course, if you have low ceilings, you will want to stick with light colors to make the room feel larger. However, that does not mean you cannot paint your ceiling a soft butter yellow or a pale blue. This will add interest to the room without there being much more than a subtle change.

If you have vaulted ceilings, then you have plenty of room to experiment. Often, vaulted ceilings that are left white can feel cavernous, empty or plain. Do not think that there is nothing you can do about those ceilings. Instead, consider experimenting with darker colors to make the ceilings feel more warm and to make the room feel more cozy.

Colors that work well with vaulted ceilings include warm chocolate browns or softer browns like a burnt sienna. If you prefer cooler tones in a room, then a slate gray works nicely as well. You do not want to choose a ceiling color that will overwhelm the rest of the room, however, so you will want to stay with soft neutral tones.

### **Popular Color Combinations for Each Room**

If you are wondering what color combinations are proven to work and are quite popular, then here are some suggestions. Keep in mind that not all color combinations work for every person. You may find that you do not like one of these color schemes but love another. When it comes to your own space, you must experiment with color and choose what works for your personality.

If you like the idea of using blacks and grays without a room looking too impersonal, there are stylish color schemes that work well for this. Choose to paint only one accent or maybe an accent wall in black. Then, choose shades of gray for accents like decorative pillows, book shelves, throw rugs and wall art. To keep the room from looking too cold, choose a stone gray or a beige with gray undertones for the rest of the walls.

Another very popular color scheme that works well in a bedroom is the combination of gold and ice blue or sky blue. In order to make this work, you will need to make use of only touches of gold to keep the room from looking garish. Choose an ice blue or a very light turquoise for the walls with trim and accents in a light crème color. Look for fabrics that include the same shades of blue with a soft gold design. Often brocade fabrics will include these shades. Then, choose accent items and artwork that include gold.

For bedrooms or even in living rooms, if you want something modern and fun with bright colors, consider this color scheme. You will want the following colors: bright turquoise, black, white and dark red. In order to keep this color scheme working without being too overwhelming, consider painting one accent wall the bright turquoise and the others white. If you are especially bold, you can use black and white as a pattern of squares or circles on the walls. Bring in the dark red through throw pillows or accents on furnishings.

### **Keeping it Warm or Cool**

It is important to remember that it is best not to mix warm and cool colors. Occasionally this will work if you are interested in adding just a small warm accent to a cool room or vice versa. However, it is best to choose warm or cool tones and stick with them throughout the room.

Just as a reminder, blues, greens, grays and whites are cool schemes. Reds, oranges, yellows, and browns are warm schemes.

Often, warm tones tend to create a cheery or cozy feel and are often chosen for living rooms, kitchens, and dining rooms. Cool schemes, on the other hand, tend to convey tranquility and serenity. This is why they are most often chosen for bathrooms and bedrooms.

### **Contrasting Color**

If you decide to make use of contrasting color schemes, you can certainly create a room that is unique, fun and full of personality. The key to making this happen is to remember to plan carefully. This is when you should most definitely bring paint samples and fabric swatches to a room before you do anything else in order to make sure the colors work well together.

Use your color wheel to make sure the contrasting colors that you choose will truly work together as well. Often, while you are in the store, the colors may seem to work nicely, but you need to take them to the actual room to see how lighting will affect them.

Choosing contrasting colors is a good way to make a bold statement and is a good way to make the space truly your own.

## **CONCLUSION**

Instead of coming home to those same drab white walls, why not experiment with color? With the thousands of colors that are just waiting out there, there is no excuse to not find one that will be perfect for your home and your personality. You do not have to be afraid to use colors on your wall. You just need to make sure you have a good idea of what colors work well together.

Now that you know how color theory works and you have a plan of action, you can get started working on your home today. Just remember to always take home samples and see how they will look. Always plan in advance, and always choose colors that you love, not just colors that work well together. Do not be afraid to use your creativity. You can redecorate your home with color and you can enjoy it too!