



Home & Food

Painting A Room: The Color Challenge

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You're tired of looking at those drab walls, and you really want to make a change. The easiest way to do that is to paint — or is it? Painting means making decisions and assembling equipment, all of which can seem a little overwhelming.

The reality is that with a little planning, and some insider expertise, you can use paint like a professional, breathing new life into that tired room decor. To start you on your way, Ralph Martin, President of Cincinnati, Ohio-based Fresh Coat Painters, agreed to share some tips about how apply color to any room:



How do I select a color for my room?

“Visit your local paint store, and pick several samples of colors at the store to take home. Now that the colors are home, get some quiet time and go through your selections either by yourself or with a consultant. ‘Consultants’ are sometimes your best friend or neighbor and that’s okay. Now here’s the real trick... First make sure the room is completely furnished/decorated as it will be when finished. Next, pick your top 3 color choices and head back to the paint store to get samples and supplies. Armed with your supplies, pick a couple of areas in the room and sponge on a 3’ x 3’ or larger section of each color and live with it for a few days. Now you can really gauge how the color will look. Colors need to work in the room 24/7 so you’ll want to see it at night, morning, and during the day painted on a surface larger than the size of a typical store sample.”

Should I paint the trim the same color as the walls? How about the ceiling?

“This is purely a matter of personal taste. Decorators tend to call rooms with darker trim relative to wall color ‘trendy’ while lighter trim tends to be ‘classic’. Ceilings painted any other color than flat white are trendy. If resale is in the not-too-distant future, stay away from trendy. Always use flat ceiling paint on ceilings. On trim, use nothing less than a satin finish — eggshell and flat finishes just don’t have the durability or clean-ability qualities needed to handle the rough abuse trim gets.”

When the paint is applied, will it look lighter/darker than the color I originally chose?

“Remember those color samples you picked up at the paint store? If you flip the sample card over you’ll find a number labeled by the letters, ‘LRV’, or Light Reflective Value. The

LRV is a scientific method to determine a color's ability to absorb or reflect light. Imagine the color black has an LRV number of 1, while the color white has a LRV number of 100. The closer your selected color's LRV number is to 1, the darker it will tend to be. LRV 1 to 50 will look darker on the wall than it did on the sample — the room will also tend to feel darker and look smaller. LRV numbers 51 to 100 tend to be truer to the sample — the rooms will tend to feel brighter and larger. The best way to get to really 'know' how a color will look is to get some larger areas painted and live with them for a few days."

Now that I have finished painting, the color is bolder than I wanted. Is there anyway to soften it up?

"In its purest form, repainting is the surest answer. However, room decorations and accessories can go a long way towards changing the 'feel' of a color due to placement, color, and texture. Start there, and then repaint as a last resort."

What are the different types of paint finishes, and in what situations are they used?

"Generally speaking there are 5 paint finishes available — Flat, Eggshell, Satin, Semi gloss, and Gloss. Flat paint tends to look the best on a wall. The reason for this is that the paint finish has virtually no light reflective qualities. Additionally, wall imperfections such as nail pops and drywall flaws tend to be hidden when flat wall paint is used. The problem is that flat paints have very little durability and do not clean very well. An easy way to spot the type of finish on a wall is to look at the wall at a 90 degree angle first then 45 degree angle. Flat will look dull at both angles, Eggshell will look flat at 90 degrees but have a slight shine at 45 degrees, Satin will have a slight shine at both 90 and 45 degrees. The general rule of thumb is that Flat finishes are the best looking with the worst durability, while Gloss is the least pleasing, most durable paint. In most cases Eggshell and Satin finishes give the right balance of great looks and reasonable cleaning qualities. Areas that are susceptible to high moisture, such as kitchens and baths, should always be a Satin Finish."

How do I know how much paint I will need?

"While more expensive paint is more cleanable and looks better on the wall than cheap paint, the big difference worth all the money is in the coverage or the 'hiding' qualities of the product. As the price per gallon increases, the hiding qualities of the paint increases, reducing the number of total gallons you'll need to complete the job. Primers are a double benefit; they are about 10 percent cheaper than a gallon of finish paint, and they can significantly reduce the number of finish coats required to finish the job. A general rule of thumb: if your new paint is the same color and finish as the old surface, then one coat will typically do the job. Any changes in color or finish should be 2 coats — maybe more. Here's an example for painting walls only (12' x 12' room with 8 foot ceilings, 2 standard doors (3'x7'each), 2 standard windows (3'x5' each)). Measure each wall separately and add together (12' x 8' x 4 = 384 total room square feet). Measure each door separately and add (3' x 7' x 2 = 42 square feet). Measure each window separately and add (3'x5'x2 = 30 square feet). Subtract the square footage of the doors and windows from the total room square feet to get the area to be painted (384' - 42' - 30' = 312 square feet). For a 1-coat room, divide that number by the paint manufacturer's listed spread rate reduced by 15 percent. The paint store manager will provide the spread rate for the product you pick. This calculation is intended in most cases to give you plenty of paint and some left over for touch-ups."