



Interior designer Clair Strong shares her advice on how to choose colours for your home

Choosing colours for your home is complex. It's very much ruled by your emotional reaction to colour. Follow a few simple rules and you will be much more confident in your colour choices.

Colour inspiration

Inspiration for a colour scheme can come from anywhere. Think about whether there is a certain shade or colour that sparks joy. Do you love a country you visit often? Is there a piece of artwork or photograph you love? A favourite film or outfit in your wardrobe? That's your inspiration!

Social media is a great place to look for inspiration – and it doesn't have to be an interior shot that dictates your colour scheme. Any images using colour combinations you love help to inspire your colour scheme.



Colour and mood

If you are thinking about a new colour scheme you need to think about how you want a room to feel. Do you want to feel excited, content, happy, relaxed or comfortable in your room? What colours will help create that mood?

Yellow is the colour of sunshine and gives off energy and warmth. A soft pastel yellow feels very soothing, like lying in a field on a summer's day and is a great colour to warm up a north facing or cold room.

Red is a colour that symbolises power, courage, passion, and strength. Red will invigorate any space but it's a bold colour so use it sparingly if you feel nervous about using such a strong hue.

Orange sits between yellow and red and combines the positivity of yellow with the passion of red.

Blue is the most relaxing colour when it comes to decorating our homes. It's a soothing colour which helps calm a busy mind.

Green is the colour we associate with nature and energy, so it's the perfect colour choice to help you feel connected to the great outdoors.

Violet represents spirituality, wisdom and peace.

White symbolises purity and freshness and can inspire mental clarity.

Grey is a versatile colour and the right shade of grey is very calming and relaxing.

How colours work together

Using a colour wheel is a really brilliant way of deciding which colours will work together in your home.

A tone-on-tone scheme uses several shades of a single hue to create a subtle serene palette (you are just adding black or white to the same colour). You can stick to light tones to create a relaxed delicate feel or go for dark tones for a moody, dramatic feel.

Complementary colours are opposite each other on the colour wheel and create an energetic feel to a space. The key is to not let one colour overwhelm the other. This scheme will naturally include a warm and a cool colour, as they're on opposite sides of the wheel. Contrast warm spicy colours with their opposite: flashes of cool turquoise blues and greens to create contrast and drama.

An analogous colour scheme uses colours found side by side on the wheel, such as orange, yellow and green to create a harmonious relaxing scheme. Neighbouring hues work well together because they share the same base colour.

Using a colour wheel is a really brilliant way of deciding which colours will work with which colours in your home.

Creating colour balance

The 60-30-10 rule is a timeless rule to use to make sure your colour palette stays balanced. The numbers refer to the percentage of each colour you use. It is a rule that helps create a colour palette for a space that will work time and time again. The 60% is the main colour in a room; it's often the walls or floors. This colour anchors the space and serves as a backdrop for the other colours in the scheme.

The secondary colour takes up about 30% of the space and is a bit bolder. You use half as much of this colour as your main colour. It could be your curtains or sofas, for instance. This secondary colour supports the main colour but is different enough to give the room interest.

The accent colour is the boldest shade and takes up 10% of the space. For a living room this could be your cushions, or in a bedroom it could be the lampshades.

Using the 60-30-10 rule can make creating a tonal palette simple.



Colours for every room

The versatility of blue makes it one of the most frequently used colours in interior decoration. Soft pastel blues create a restful, spa-like backdrop in bathrooms or peaceful bedrooms, while strong, punchy blue palettes make for sophisticated studies or dramatic living spaces.

Choose a blue with a warm undertone to prevent it looking cold and unwelcoming and stick to soft blues. Blues are great in spaces like bedrooms as they can help reduce stress and promote a good night's sleep.

Green is making a real come-back this year. Kitchen designers are seeing a real trend for green Shaker style kitchens - with simple cabinetry, traditional fittings and wooden flooring all pairing perfectly with shades of soft olive or pale sage green. Green works well in traditional and modern kitchens and with almost every other colour and most materials. Think green with wood, marble, granite, concrete - It just works!

Choose soft shades like a pretty lilac for bedrooms and bathrooms to create a stress-free sanctuary. Lilacs and violets can be overpowering so mix them with blacks and metallics for a sophisticated glamorous look.

Warm colours are good in rooms where you want to actively recharge; they will stimulate as well as inspire. For this reason, I'd stick to the earthier warm toned colours in spaces you want to be calm and contemplative - like studies, bathrooms and bedrooms.

Hallways are also great places to try red and yellow tones - to inject energy throughout the house.

Orange is a colour that I think is better used for accessories in a home. A pop of orange can be a wonderful contrast to dark navy blue, say.

Organic and earthy, cool and clean, rich and luxe - neutral hues can be used anywhere in the home. The key is really to use the right tones in the right room.

Colour and space

Remember, you must always also consider the shape of the space, the quality of light and the function of the room when deciding which colour is best.

Cooler colours make a room appear larger. Warmer colours make them appear more closed and smaller to the eye. How you use colour in a room can also change its perspective - you can make it look taller, longer or wider - or highlight a particular element.

You can make your ceiling look lower by painting your ceiling a darker shade - and bringing the colour down a few centimetres onto the walls. This blurs the line between ceiling and wall.

Use a light blue or white on the ceiling and a darker shade on the walls to create the illusion of a higher ceiling. You can even use the same colour - just use a darker tone on the walls and a lighter tone on the ceiling.

Make a long room look less like a corridor by painting one of the walls a deep spicy warm colour. It will foreshorten the room.

Create colour mood boards

Creating a mood board helps you work out which colours work together. Create a colour mood board on Pinterest or go analogue and use images torn from magazines, fabric swatches, paint and wallpaper samples, images from interiors brochures, tiles and pieces of flooring. Play around with the colours until you are happy.

Seeing your colour scheme on a mood board helps you refine your choices before you start decorating.

If you need advice on creating a colour scheme for your home, nothing beats the experience of a professional interior designer to help you confidently plan your project.

If you are looking to revamp your space, working with an interior designer will really help you use your budget wisely and create a look that feels cohesive, pulled together and will stand the test of time.

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