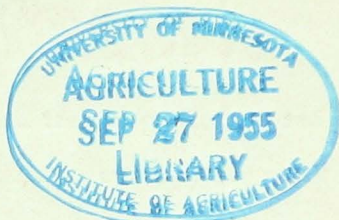


Letting COLOR work for ... You!



in home furnishings



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**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

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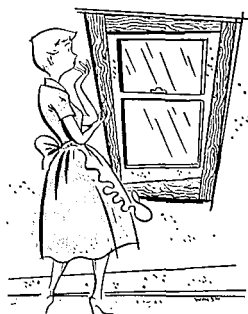
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Letting ***COLOR*** Work for you in . . . **home furnishings**

Color is one of the most effective means of decorating your home. A great deal of enjoyment is in store for you if you know how to let color work for you. It can create attractive and cheerful surroundings for your family with little expense. Color will do a good job of camouflaging poor architectural features such as too-high ceilings and rooms that are too small, too large, or too dark.

Some people seem to have a flair for using color. Many of us, however, find it necessary to study color seriously in order to make choices which will be satisfying over a long period of time. A few tried and proven color principles may work wonders for you.

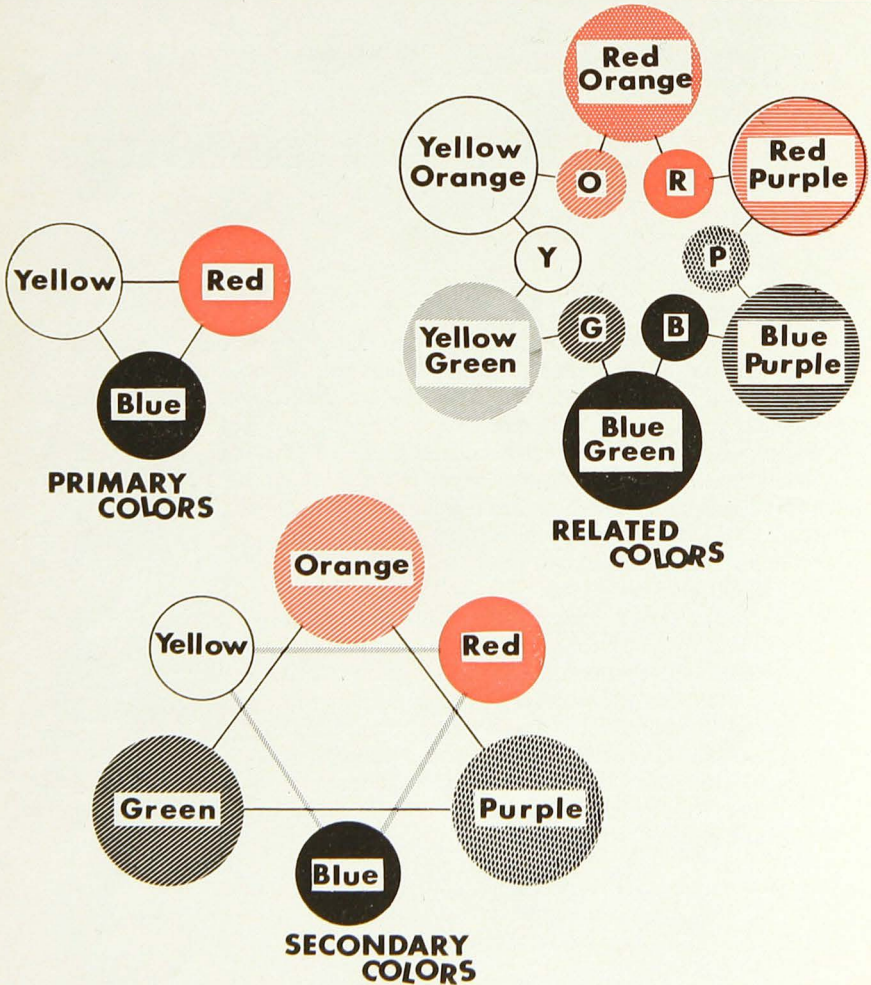
Each color by itself is beautiful. Since colors are used together, not separately, in our homes, we need to be sure they look well together and are well suited to the purpose for which they are selected. The following statements may be used as guiding principles to help you **let color work for you**.



What Are Color Qualities?

Every color has three qualities:

1. **Hue**—gives each color its own name such as green, red, or yellow.
2. **Value**—gives each color a degree of lightness or darkness.
3. **Intensity**—gives a degree of brightness or dullness to each color.



How To Get All Colors

The three fundamental or primary colors are red, yellow, and blue. These three primary colors can not be made by mixing others. To obtain other colors the primary colors are combined.

Mix—red and yellow to get orange
red and blue to get purple
yellow and blue to get green.

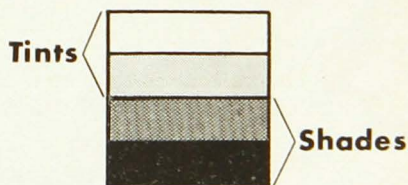
The resulting colors are called secondary colors.

Thinking of primary colors as the parent colors, we may consider all other colors children or relatives of the primaries. Many more colors are obtained when varying amounts of the parent colors are mixed. When a primary and a secondary are mixed the resulting color gets its name from its parents: red-orange, red-purple, blue-purple, blue-green, yellow-green, yellow-orange.

Many colors are known by their fashion names such as: salmon, rose, russet, wine, aqua, Nile, and maize. It is safer to describe colors according to hue since fashion names may have different meanings for different people.

Color Values

White is the lightest and black is the darkest of all colors. Light colors are said to be **tints** and dark colors are **shades**. Between the lightest tint of any hue and its darkest shade there are many different values.



Bright Colors

Each bright color is lovely all by itself, but becomes hard to use and very harsh when combined with other intense colors. Bright colors demand attention and tire the eye when used in large amounts. Articles which can easily be changed, such as pillow covers and accessories, may well be bright notes of color in any color scheme. They are needed to give spice or life to it. Backgrounds and major furnishing items give longer lasting satisfaction when they are quiet rather than loud in color.

A very bright color may be toned down or softened in two ways. One is by the addition of black, gray, or white. This method, although simple and easy to do, often results in a muddy looking color. The second way is by the addition of a complement. Complementary colors are found opposite each other on the chart. They complete a balance of warmth and coolness and when mixed they become grayed. Far more interesting colors can be produced by this method than by adding white, black, or gray to the bright color. The beautiful family of browns and beiges are made by neutralizing the oranges with blue. The interesting golds come from neutralizing yellow with purple. We get lovely olive greens when red is added to green.

Warm and Cool Colors

The colors which give a cooling effect are the blues and blue-purples. Yellow, orange, and red are the warm colors. Green is between warm and cool gaining warmth as it grows yellowish, and coolness as it becomes bluish. Cool colors seem to recede or give a feeling of more



space. This is especially true of light cool colors. A dark value of a cool color seems to close in since dark values do this more readily. Warm colors seem to be close or come toward you, giving a feeling of less space. Warm colors produce a cozy warmth in a room. Cool colors are more formal, reserved, and give spaciousness to a room.

Neutral Colors

Black, white, and gray are considered neutral colors. They may be used along with other colors in a color scheme to keep it from being monotonous. Used in minor amounts they very quietly give added interest. Small amounts of black may be used quite successfully. It can be morbid and dismal in effect, if too large amounts are used. However, using some black can be very smart if carefully done, such as a black sofa or a black table top. Too large amounts of a cool gray also may produce a very cold, cheerless effect. Snowy white gives a fresh clean look to a room and a decided note of interest when used in contrast to dark colors.

Very much care should be taken in the selection of grays to be used in a color scheme. A gray to be used with mainly warm colors will necessarily need to be a warm gray—having some yellow in it. A gray to be used with mainly cool colors will need to be a cool gray—having some purple in it. Cool grays used in the same room with warm grays will be unkind to each other.

Color Scheming

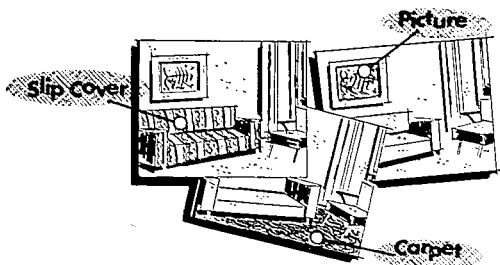
Even though a complete redecoration or decorating job cannot be done at one time, it is well to make a long-time plan and follow it until it is completed.

Every good color scheme must have a starting point. Since the average homemaker cannot change everything in a room at one time, she will build the scheme around the furnishings which she must keep. Sources of good color schemes might be:

1. A colorful picture which you enjoy and will use in the room.
2. A patterned slip cover or drapery fabric.
3. A good carpet which you have and intend to keep.

It will be easy to pick up or pull out a color from the source or starting point.

Usually it is better to **limit** the colors in a room to **two** or **three** hues. Several values of a hue may be used. For example, a dark shade of the hue might be used for a chair, a light value or tint used for the wall color, and the hue at maximum intensity for a pillow cover.



Balancing Colors

To balance amounts of color in a room you will need to:

1. Use a warm note of color as a contrast in an all cool color scheme, and a cool note of color to contrast an all warm color scheme.
2. Balance values in a room by using a small quantity of a light value to balance a large amount of dark, and a small amount of dark to balance large amounts of light.
3. Once a color is used in a room, it is well to use it again. A color seems to belong if it is used in another article. A book, magazine, pillow, or an accessory may pick up and repeat the color of a chair. Used too often the same color can be very ordinary, like a woman wearing a red hat, red shoes, red bag, and gloves all the same red.
4. Keep large areas such as walls and floors quiet in effect. The larger the area the duller and more quiet the color must become.
5. Use small areas for sharp contrasts in value and intensity.



How Much Pattern?

The most important guide to follow in selecting the amount of pattern for one room is—**no room is large enough to house more than one dominant or large-scaled pattern.** Too many patterns in a room all try to command your attention at once—giving a feeling of restlessness and confusion as shown in the illustration above.

Where the room is large or more pattern is desired, it is well to pick up the colors already present in the room in a **stripe** of varied widths. A **plaid** may often be used with another pattern. A subtle woven pattern may give a **textured effect.** A **tweed** or mingled effect may give the desired result without actually adding another pattern large enough in scale to demand attention.

Background Colors

Backgrounds should be less conspicuous than the objects silhouetted against them. The quieter the backgrounds of the room, the more effective are the furnishings used with them. Orange, yellow-orange, and yellow, when grayed enough—as in tans and warm grays—are the most useful colors for backgrounds. These soft toned colors are said to be unifying colors.

Colors for Individuals

Use colors which family members like and ones which complement individual coloring of those who will live in the room. Colors you like give you more enjoyment from your surroundings.

Children and Colors



Children just naturally love color. They love it subtle and delicate—bright and lively. Seldom will they enjoy dark and gloomy colors. Let them help with the selection of colors for their own rooms.

Colors for Various Rooms

Bedrooms—Colors may be entirely **restful** such as the cool colors, if only resting is to be done in the bedroom. When resting, sewing, and living are done there, the color scheme will need to be **alive** and light-hearted. Very bright and very warm toned colors hold too much excitement for use in large areas of bedrooms.



Entrance Halls—Because people are in hallways for a relatively short time—the colors used in them can be gayer and brighter than you would want other areas of the house.

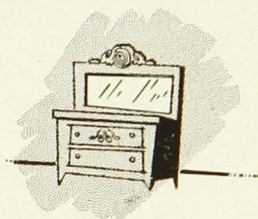
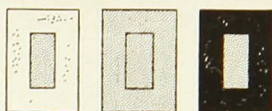
Dining Areas—Color for dining rooms may be gay, warm, and stimulating. Cheerful surroundings can make mealtimes a pleasure.

Living Rooms—Colors for living rooms need to give a warm welcome to all. They will be less gay and stimulating than ones used in the dining room and can be more lively than ones used in a bedroom. It is wise to try to achieve a more spacious and less cluttered effect in living rooms where more people spend more time doing more things than in any other room in the house.

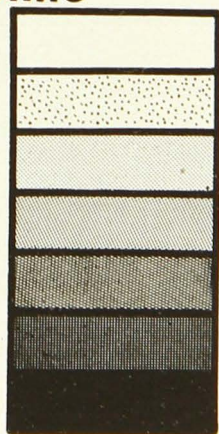
Kitchens—Kitchen colors need to be gay and cheerful since the homemaker spends more time here than in any other room.

Common Sense Helps for Using Color in Home Furnishings

1. Bright, raw color is harsh and hard to use. Use it effectively in small amounts to give life to your color schemes.
2. Use a sharp contrast of values as a background for a lovely piece of furniture. Hide the ugly shaped one against a background exactly the same value or color.
3. Interest is gained by using some dark and some light values together. Using all of the same values in a room will give a monotonously dull, uninteresting room.
4. White or off-white is best for ceilings since it will reflect a maximum of light. Light reflected from the walls onto the ceiling will give it a tint of the wall color. A harmonizing off-white ceiling can be made by adding a small amount of wall color to the ceiling color. Warm tones and darker values seem to bring high ceilings closer to the floor than do light, cool tones.
5. Cool and light colors give a feeling of more space and are used to make small dark rooms appear larger.
6. Warm and dark colors seem to be close to you and are used to make large rooms appear smaller.
7. Here's a rule-of-thumb color for floors of all kinds—try to match the value of the soil outside the door. Your floors will show less soil. Dark soil shows on very light floors while light soil and dust show very soon on dark floors. Middle value is usually a more practical choice for floors. A mingle or marbled effect is an excellent choice in a hard surface floor covering, while mixtures and tweeds are fine in carpets and rugs.
8. Create a feeling of warmth in a room having little or no sunlight entering windows by the use of warm light tones such as yellow, peach, rose, or salmon.



White

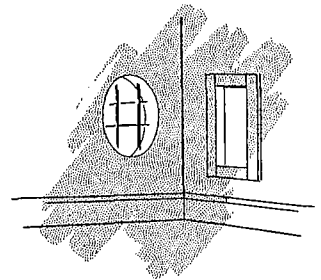


Middle

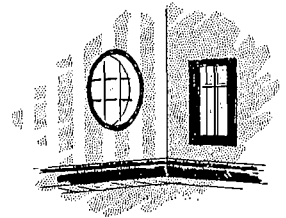
Black

9. Be sure to consider the color of exposed wood used in pieces of furniture, woodwork trim, and floors. Most wood tones are warm and look well backed by cool colors which flatter them.
10. For inspiration in creating new color schemes go to nature—not the whole countryside views, but look at smaller pieces of nature such as a rock, a leaf, a flower, or a piece of bark.
11. You can continue a color harmony throughout your home by repeating colors used for one room in the next rooms. A color used on the wall in one room might be used for the floor covering in the next. It is pleasing to the eye to see a harmonizing color through an open door.

12. Hide unpleasant features such as irregularly shaped windows and doors or large radiators by painting all the same color as the walls. A room cut up by dark woodwork and doors, baseboards, and picture moulding takes on a feeling of spaciousness when all are the same color. The smaller the room, the more effective it will be.

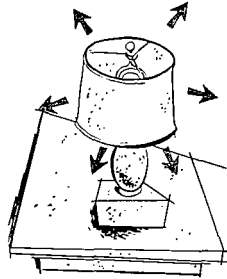


13. Keep the number of colors used down to two or three for any one room.



14. Two colors least successfully combined by inexperienced persons are red-orange and red-purple. For example—rose, wine, burgundy, and purple are all poor choices to use with orange-toned wild cherry and colonial maple woods.

15. Red and chartreuse are poor choices for translucent lamp shades. A red shade over a large bulb casts a bright red light which in a short time will cause eye strain. A chartreuse shade casts a yellow-green light over people and food and is most unflattering to both. A translucent white lamp shade casts a maximum of good quality light and goes well with most bases and furnishings. Opaque shades of any color will shed good quality light if the linings are kept white.



16. A good color scheme is made up of **live, cheerful colors and blends** all of the furnishings in a room. It reflects the tastes and personalities of those who live there. It takes on individuality when the choices are ones you like and enjoy.



Some Questions on Color Answered

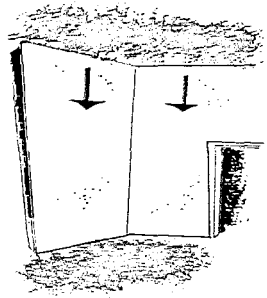
- Q. Our front hallway faces the north, is overly large and always seems dismal and uninviting. What color will help to overcome the difficulty?**
- A.** The entrance of any home should be friendly and inviting with a warm welcome for those who come. A color selected from the warm hues will create the needed feeling of warmth and apparently decrease its size. A dulled yellow, coral, or rose may be most satisfying. Sheer, warm-colored curtains will shed a warm light and create the illusion of sunlight coming thru the window.
- Q. Our home is small and has many windows providing ample light. The woodwork and doors are a dark varnish. Previously we lived in a big home where our large scaled furniture looked right. Now this same furniture makes all of our rooms seem crowded. How can we overcome the crowded feeling?**
- A.** A light, cool color gives a feeling of spaciousness. Much would be gained by having woodwork, walls, doors, baseboards, and curtains or draperies all the same color. The furniture would be less conspicuous if it could be slipcovered or reupholstered in a value close to the wall color. Continue the color scheme into adjoining rooms. Some contrasts of bright and warm color will keep the very light scheme from being monotonous.
- Q. In selecting the color for a bedroom wall from the merchant's color card, I picked out exactly the one I wanted. When the job was completed it was very much darker and brighter than I thought it would be. How could I have avoided this?**
- A.** It is almost impossible to look at a small color sample and visualize the finished result. A color on a chart will always appear darker and brighter when used on a large area. One should always select a paint color from the chart that is lighter than the color you want your room to be when it is painted. Paint a sample area on the wall and let it dry. If it is too dark or too bright add white gradually and paint another sample and let it dry. Dry color and wet color can be very different, especially if you are using a rubber base paint which dries much darker than a wet sample. The best way to neutralize the brighter color is by adding a small amount of the complementary color. Small tubes of pigment in both rubber base and oil paints can be purchased for this purpose.

Q. We need a new living room floor covering. We have four lively children, one is in school. We have numerous pets and there are many children in the neighborhood. Our income is limited and so is my time for caring for floors. We'd like to get a color which will go well with everything for a long time, and one which will show little soil. What would you suggest?

A. Since care and expense are of prime importance, a hard surface covering would be your best choice. A middle value tan or warm gray in a mixture, mingle, or marbled effect using several colors or values will be a good choice. Try to match the value of the soil which will be tracked in. It will show less.

Q. Our ceilings are very high. Is there a color which will make them seem lower?

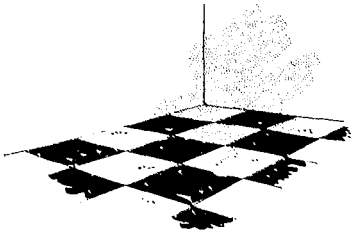
A. Although white ceilings reflect maximum light, this ceiling would be helped by the use of a light, warm color. If the room is not used for close work, such as reading, sewing, and homework, the ceiling might be a value darker than the walls. The brighter and warmer the tone used on the ceiling the closer the ceiling seems to the floor. It also helps to drop the ceiling color down on the wall 12 or 18 inches. This is especially true if there is a picture molding at this height which provides a structural break.



Some Do's and Don't's

DON'T—

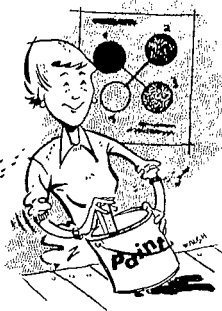
- Use solid black on a kitchen counter or floor—every time you use flour it will become dusty. The same goes for a bathroom.
- Lay alternating linoleum tile blocks in black and white on your kitchen floor. You will be chasing the dust on the black and scrubbing the white to keep it clean.



- Use white for woodwork in the kitchen unless it is needed to give light. A light natural wood color is much easier to keep clean and does not show every sticky fingerprint.
- Use white rugs unless you are willing to do all of the work of caring for them.
- Get too bright a color in major or large home furnishing items. You will tire of them long before they wear out or can be replaced.
- Try to copy rooms from magazines or other people's homes. Create color schemes that express you and your family.
- Try to lighten a brown paint with white. It will turn purplish since commercial brown paints are made from black and red pigments. Buy a light enough brown paint to begin with so that you will not have to change it.

DO—

- ★ Live with colors you enjoy.
- ★ Dare to try unusual colors together; you may be delighted with the result.
- ★ Dare to mix your own paints to get exactly the match or color you want.
- ★ Try dyeing or tinting old curtains to liven up a color scheme.
- ★ Watch for color fastness and resistance to fading when you buy curtains, draperies, and slipcovers.
- ★ Be conservative when you choose colors for major furnishings such as living room rugs, couches, or draperies for picture windows.
- ★ Save a wet sample of your paint color. You will need it for matching in case you need to mix the same color again.
- ★ Seek professional help if you are faced with a very difficult color problem which has you stumped.
- ★ Reap real enjoyment from being your own interior decorator.



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