



Choosing Your Wall Finish

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Choosing Your Wall Finish

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When you choose a finish for your walls, remember that they are the background of your room. As such use them to play up and make more beautiful your other furnishings. A background should not call attention to itself. This does not mean that a wall can't be interesting, for certainly it should. But don't let it overpower the rest of your room. Two things will help you avoid this:

1. Don't use large areas of bold pattern. If you need a large pattern for special effect, use it on only one wall or part of a wall. Otherwise, use less conspicuous patterns, texture, or plain finishes.
2. Use soft, greyed or low intensity colors. Any color looks much brighter on a large area than on a small one. When you select a color, look at a large sample of it against your wall. Save your bright colors for smaller areas (small chairs, pillows, etc.) and use softer tones for your background. Your county home agent will know how to soften a paint color that is too bright.

Some things that influence your choice of wall finish are: (1) Colors in your room, (2) Pattern in your room, (3) Amount of light, (4) Size of room, (5) Shape of room, (6) Use of room, (7) Condition of the walls, and (8) Requirements of your family.

COLORS IN YOUR ROOM

Blend your wall finish to your total color scheme. Have you seen rooms where too many colors have been used? Didn't they seem cluttered and disorganized? To make a room interesting and harmonious, use only a few colors. You can get variety by using dark, light, dull or bright qualities of one color. Always select a wall color that is repeated somewhere else in your room. Since your walls are so large in area, one way to make your room attractive is to choose for them a tone of your dominant color. This means to select for your walls either the color of your floor covering or of several pieces of furniture. Use different values of one color on your largest areas to unify your room.

PATTERN IN YOUR ROOM

Use the pattern already in your room to help you decide on the amount of pattern for your walls. Remember not to use more than one large pattern in a room. If your room has this large pattern on furniture, drapes, or floors, use plain or textured walls. Pictures and book shelves also create pattern on walls. You'll find it more difficult to use pictures on patterned walls than on plain ones.

AMOUNT OF LIGHT

The less natural light you have in a room, the more important it is to have a wall color which reflects a high percentage of light. You'll find there is a wide variation in the amount of natural light in rooms. In general, those with a south or west exposure receive more light than those on the east or north. However, your porches, shade trees, and size of windows will all affect the amount.

White reflects more light than any other surface and black less. White reflects back about 80 percent of all light that strikes it. Black reflects only about 5 percent while all other colors run the gamut between the two. (Fig. 1.) The lighter the tone, the more light it reflects. How often would you want to lose 78 percent of all light that comes into your room? It's doubtful that you ever would and yet that is exactly what happens if you choose dark green for your wall color. Other dark colors reflect similar small amounts. If your room has a good amount of natural light you may want to use a

Percent Light Reflected

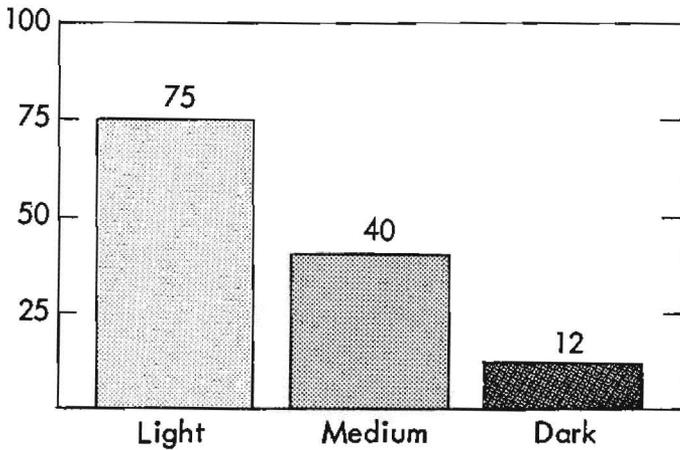


Fig. 1—Percent of light reflected by different tones of one color.

medium-light tone, but unless you have very good natural light you may find it best to choose a very light color.

The color for your ceilings is just as important as that for your walls. Do you have lamps or ceiling fixtures with open tops? These throw light upward and your ceiling reflects it back to you. Thus your ceilings to a large degree control the amount of light you have at night. Choose a color for them that reflects more than 70 percent light. This might be either white or some off-white tint. (Use your wall color to tint the white slightly if you feel it is necessary to have color).

SIZE OF ROOM

Color and pattern both have a great effect on the apparent size of a room. Make a small room seem more spacious by using plain walls. Or, if your room needs pattern, you might choose one in various light tones of one soft color.

Cool colors (blues, greens, violets) make a room seem larger than warm ones (yellow, gold, beige, pink, rose, etc.). Whatever you choose, be sure to use light colors if you want to make your room look larger. This is true of any kind of wall finish—paneling, brick, stone, tile—as well as paint and wallpaper.

SHAPE OF ROOM

Just as you use color and pattern to change the apparent size of a room, use it also to change the apparent shape. Here are ideas for a few problem rooms:

1. Ceiling too high—There are methods that work very well for making a ceiling seem lower. One is to bring your ceiling color about a foot or more down on the wall. (Fig. 2). Another obvious way to make a ceiling seem lower is to use a dark color on it. However, this will greatly reduce the amount of light in the room.

Use as many horizontal lines as you can in a room with too high ceilings. Avoid using vertical stripes in this type room. Neither high nor low ceilings are necessarily bad. These suggestions will help you change their appearance if you wish.

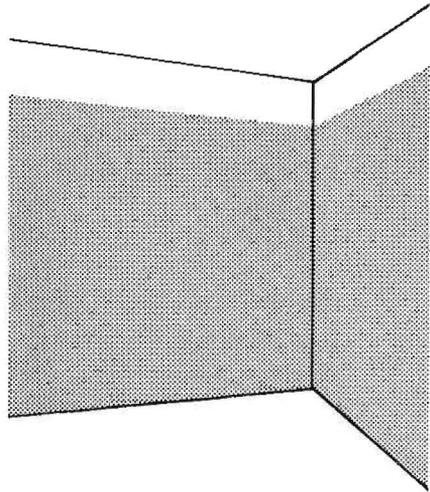


Fig. 2—One method of making a ceiling seem lower.

2. Ceiling too low—Of course, a white or off-white color will make your ceiling seem higher. Other things you can do are to use a vertical design on your walls or draperies or choose a drapery color that contrasts with the walls.

3. A square room—You can make a square room appear longer by contrasting one wall with the others. For example, you may use a figured paper on the one wall and on the others a solid color that matches the wallpaper background. You can use one pair of opposite walls in one color and the other two in a lighter color to get a rectangular effect. (Fig. 3). Paneling on one wall also helps make your room seem less square.

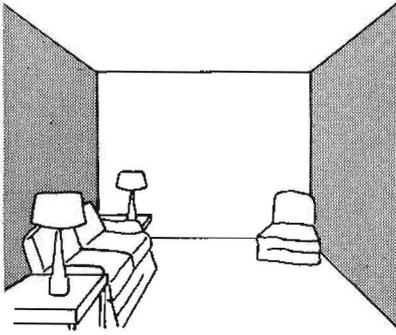


Fig. 3—Darker tones on opposite walls make square rooms seem rectangular.

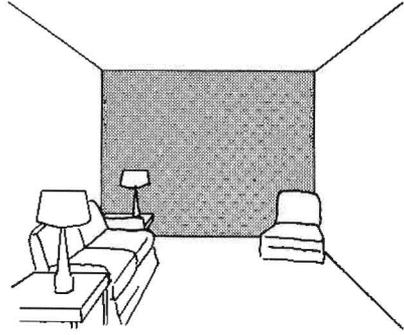


Fig. 4—Darker tones on end walls make long rooms seem shorter, wider.

4. Room too long and narrow—To make this type room look wider and shorter, make the short walls contrast with the long ones. (Fig. 4.) Use a light color on the long walls, a slightly darker color on the short ones. Or, use a pattern on the short walls and a matching solid color on the long ones. Shelves, storage units, or a fireplace on one of the short walls will also give more width.

5. Walls cut up by many doors and windows—You can make this type of room look much less spotty by using solid color wall finishes. Paint all woodwork the same color as the walls for a still more unified effect. (Fig. 5)

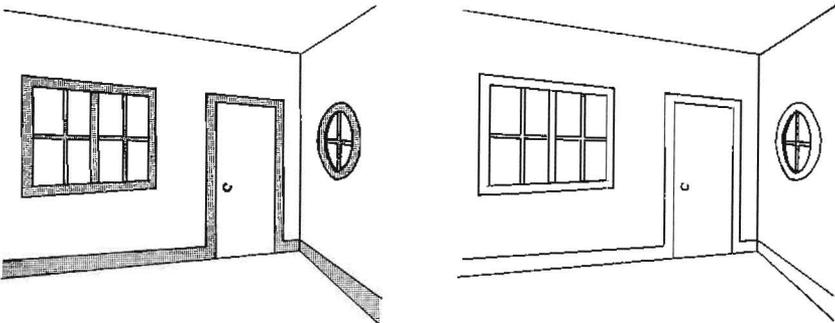


Fig. 5—A room with many doors and windows seems small and "cut up." To unify it, paint all woodwork the color of the wall.

USE OF ROOM

The use you make of your room will help you determine which finish to choose.

Because you spend so much time in your living room, and you want to rest in your bedroom, use soft, greyed tones there, in a muted pattern or solid color.

There is a group of rooms such as entrance halls and separate dining rooms that are not used constantly. These rooms can have stronger color and pattern because you are not in them for long periods of time.

The walls of entrance halls may not always be a background for furniture. Many times entrance halls have little or no furniture and in such cases the walls need to be the decorative feature of the room rather than the background. In these cases stronger pattern and color may be used. Remember, however, that large patterns will make a small room seem even smaller. If the entrance is tiny and has walls on four sides a very bold pattern may be overpowering.

CONDITION OF THE WALLS

The condition of your wall plays a big part in your choice of finish. Are your walls even and free of cracks? How lucky you are, for you have the choice of any wall finish without the expense of costly repairs. A smooth paint or regular wallpaper will work nicely on your walls.

If your walls are uneven, a different finish may be a better choice. For a permanent solution, refinish them with paneling, plaster, or wall board. However, there are many other finishes, less expensive than these, which offer good temporary solutions. Textured or spatter paints hide defects much better than smooth types. Fabric backed wallpapers also give good hiding power for uneven walls.

REQUIREMENTS OF YOUR FAMILY

How much can you afford to spend for your wall finish? The answer will lie partly in how long it will last your family and how easily you can keep it fresh looking. Choose one that is practical for your use, both in length of life and ease of cleaning.

Do you like frequent decorating changes? Then probably you won't choose one of the expensive, long wearing finishes such as

paneling or other hard surface types. Those are for you if you want your wall to last a long time with very little upkeep.

In general, the better quality paint or paper you buy, the longer it will last. Good quality usually costs no more in the long run because of its longer life. The higher quality products may have better design and be easier to clean.

Will your wall be subject to heavy soil? If so, choose one of the really washable finishes—a fabric or plastic-imbedded wallpaper, a smooth wall tile, or a satin finish or semi-gloss paint. Never use flat paint on the walls of kitchens or other rooms you need to spot-wipe often. Satin or semi-gloss types are much more washable.

When You Choose a Wall Finish, Remember to:

- 1. Choose a color that blends with the total color scheme of your home.**
- 2. Avoid strong colors and large patterns on large wall areas.**
- 3. Avoid patterned walls if room has much other pattern.**
- 4. Use a light color unless room has large amount of natural light.**
- 5. Use light colors when you want rooms to look larger.**
- 6. Choose soft colors for rooms where you relax.**
- 7. Avoid smooth paints or wallpaper on uneven walls. Instead, use textured or spatter paints or hard surface wall covering.**
- 8. Use completely washable wall paper or satin-finish or semi-gloss paint on walls you wash often.**