

Color

by Erika Woelfel

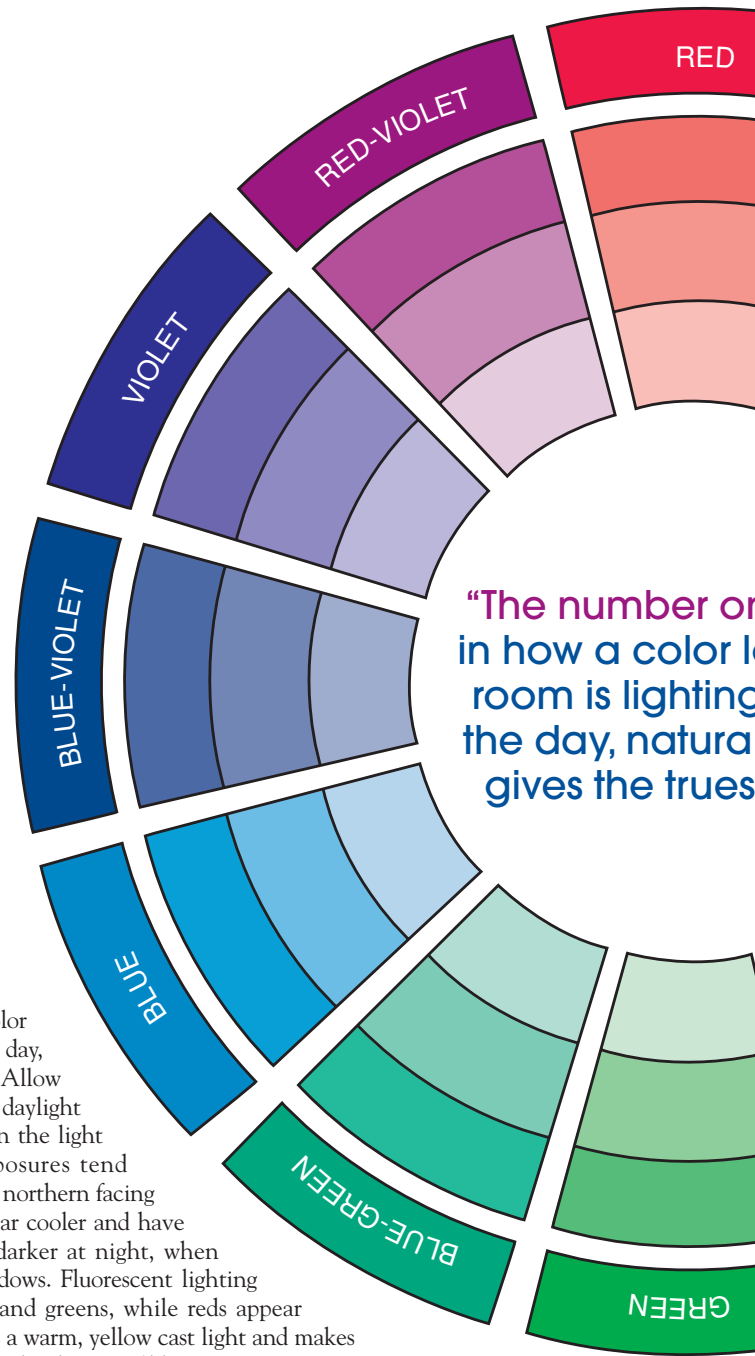


COLOR INTELLIGENCE

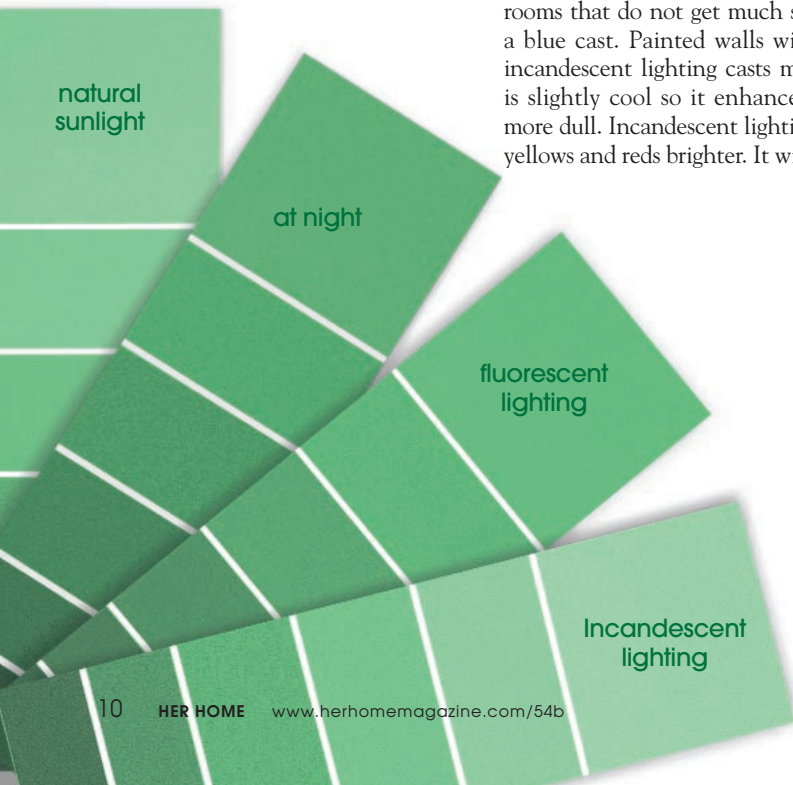
Why your walls don't always match those little color chips from the paint store.

It had happened again. There we were, knee deep in drop cloths, paint brushes, masking tape and ladders – and the color on the paint chip did not resemble what was going on the walls. My friend had decided to go with a soft pink in her daughter's bedroom. "Ballerina" the color chip was a light pastel, reminiscent of cotton candy. "Ballerina" the paint color looked like Pepto Bismal on the walls. My friend claimed the paint chip looked different at home than it did under the store lights. She was right.

The number one factor in how a color looks in a room is lighting. During the day, natural sunlight gives the truest color. Allow for variances depending on how much daylight comes into a room and what direction the light is coming from. Tip: Southern exposures tend to have brighter, warmer light quality; northern facing rooms that do not get much sun appear cooler and have a blue cast. Painted walls will look darker at night, when incandescent lighting casts many shadows. Fluorescent lighting is slightly cool so it enhances blues and greens, while reds appear more dull. Incandescent lighting sheds a warm, yellow cast light and makes yellows and reds brighter. It will dull the brightness of blue.

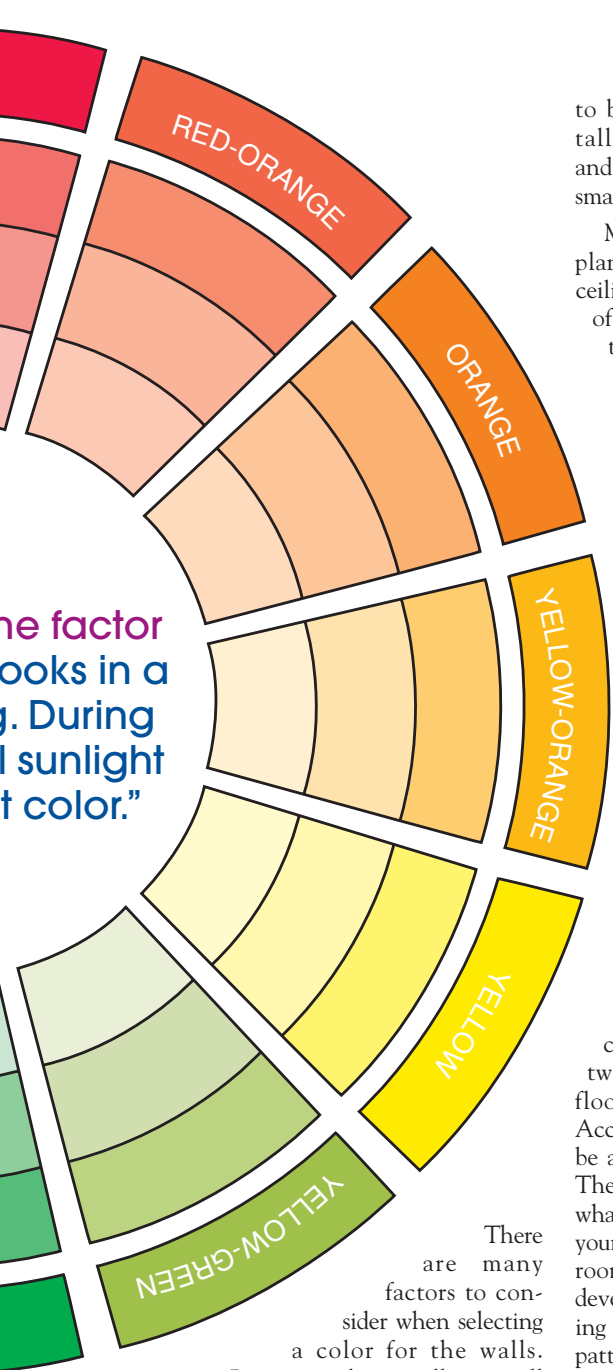


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Erika Woelfel understands the importance of color in the home. She is Senior Color Designer of the Colwell Color Studio, a company that produces color merchandising tools for the decorative products industry. Her insights on color trends and usage have won her international recognition as a speaker and writer.

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There are many factors to consider when selecting a color for the walls.

Paint on a large wall area will always look darker, or more intense than the small paint chip. The texture of the wall surface can also slightly change the appearance of a color. Sheen levels (flat or shininess) in paint make a difference, too. A flat finish makes color look more dry and chalky and absorbs more light. Eggshell or satin finishes make color appear polished and will reflect more light.

The rule of opposites:

The size of your room also affects the final look of paint. You can use a few tricks to your advantage. All colors have a temperature – they fall into a warm or cool category. Reds, yellows and oranges are considered warm – they visually advance towards you to make a room seem smaller. Use them for areas where you want

to bring down the scale of high ceilings or tall walls. Cool colors such as blue, green and violet visually recede. Use them to make small rooms feel more spacious.

Many new homes today have open floor plans with great expanses of wall, very high ceilings, and large windows which allow in lots of natural daylight. Bright colors are going to look more intense in these spaces. One or two accent walls is a good way to bring brighter or darker colors into your room. For colors that aren't as visually overpowering, try using neutrals, earth tones, or lighter values of your favorite bright/dark hues on tall walls.

Paint manufacturers are coming up with some savvy ways to hurdle these colorful challenges. Large color samples are available in many retail centers. Small samples of liquid paint are also becoming more available, dispensed from jars or pouches that give just enough color to brush out a test swatch on a wall. Leave color swatches on the walls a few days and look at them during different times of day, under different light sources before determining whether you want to live with your new color.

Paint stores provide many handy brochures to provide pre-determined color combination. A dominant color and one or two accents usually serve to balance walls, floors, furnishings and window treatments. Accent colors provide the visual sizzle and can be anything from pillows to artwork to plants. The key to color combinations is determining what colors you already have to work with. Edit your selections. The pieces you choose for the room should determine how your color story develops. If you are keeping the sofa and changing the walls, is there a color in the upholstery pattern you can use for paint? Do you have a particular piece of artwork that would just sing if the wall behind it were painted a color from its palette? Is there a view outside the window that provides color inspiration you would like to bring indoors?

So how did my friend solve her Pepto Bismal color challenge? Aside from the walls, the floor color is often the second largest space of color in a room. A green carpet will reflect a minty shade on white walls. Red carpets will make white walls look pink. Knowing this, she counter-balanced the room by installing an off-white carpet on the floor to reflect light up. The ceiling of the room was finished with a darker shade of pink to make the walls appear lighter. Bright artwork with white frames and mattes completed the feminine effect.

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It has often been said small rooms should never be painted dark or bold colors because it makes them seem smaller. While this is generally true, if you have a small room or back hallway that gets really good light, a dramatic color makes an exciting statement. Another tip for small rooms – don't forget the fifth wall! A ceiling painted bold red, yellow, blue or green draws the eye up for Aha! Impact.



Designer Sharon Bledsoe Designs

photo by: Robert Hock

Cool colors such as blue, green and violet visually recede. Use them to make rooms feel more spacious.



In open floor plans, colors such as earth-toned neutrals, grays and off whites work well because they aren't visually overpowering.