

# COLOR AND LIGHT

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Light, both natural and artificial, will also affect your final choice of color. There is a world of difference between artificial and natural light, and if you intend to use the room in both the daytime and the evening you should view your proposed colors and surfaces under both conditions. Otherwise you can get an unpleasant shock when the room is finished and it's too late to change your mind. For example, some dark shades go almost black under artificial light, while both reds and greens alter their characters according to the type and degree of light they receive.

Levels of light vary dramatically too, the further away you move from the window, so a color in low light will look completely different from the same color in direct sunlight. Another consideration is the quality and quantity of natural light-how large the windows are and which way they face-since wise choice of color can often improve or enhance existing conditions here too. This should also be borne in mind when choosing carpets and upholstery fabrics as some are prone to fading in direct sunlight, especially reds, which are notoriously difficult to dye-fix.

South-facing rooms (north-facing in the southern hemisphere) enjoy light and sunshine most of the day; they look naturally warm and bright, so you can use the cooler colors like blue and green without worrying that they are going to create too chilly and uncomfortable an environment. Most colors will respond well to these near-ideal conditions, but to emphasize that light airy feel, use pale shades or sunny yellows. It is usually the rooms that receive no sun that need a little color assistance to improve their outlook and general ambience. Their chilly light can be warmed by using rich colors like red, orange and brown; and thick, textural fabrics such as velvet and tapestry. Where the room is dull and gloomy, liberal use of white or yellow is an instant lightener and, strategically placed, can even be used to bounce light from one area to another.

If a room is intended for use largely in artificial light, the way different colors perform under your intended lighting treatment should be given priority. Some shades change dramatically under a standard household light bulb with its yellowish tungsten filament light. Reds can be warmed and strengthened, but certain greens lose all their color and become muddy brown.

The clear, white light of low-voltage halogen lights, on the other hand, produces a clean, sharp effect, bringing out an object's true colors. These are useful for reinforcing a highlighted effect or pinpointing a certain feature. Fluorescent lights are the least flattering, their hard almost bluish light tends to flatten shadows and make colors look dull and cold, although some of the newer types can offer a warmer kind of light.

You may have come across specially tinted light bulbs marketed specifically for decorative use. These are designed to cast a certain rosy, blue or honeyed glow over the room, and are aimed at neutral schemes where a whole new atmosphere and feel can be created for no more than the cost of a new light bulb. They should be used with caution, however, where a more sophisticated color design has been planned, since an additional wash of colored light might not mix as well as you hope.

## SUGGESTING A COLOUR THEME

Choosing your main color theme is really only half the battle &ndash; the all-important next step is deciding how to use it to create a successful interior scheme. So before you start choosing the essential elements, remember that colors are affected by each other, and the way they interact or take dominance depends not only on the shade of the color but also on the proportions in which they are used.

If you look closely at a successful color scheme you may be surprised to see that the room does not have to be saturated with a particular color to produce the general impression of a single shade; against the lights and shades of well-blended neutrals, a few selected details could be sufficient to make the appropriate visual suggestion.

This is particularly true of the strong &ldquo;up-front&rdquo; colors like red, purple or gold. Because these are naturally so dominant, you need only the smallest touches: a couple of cushions, for instance, or some detailing such as a stripe or border will be enough for your eye to presume it is the predominant factor. You often see this effect in kitchen, where a range of accessories successfully determines a color scheme, or in the bathroom, where co-ordinated towels and soaps set the color key because there are few other contrasting textures.

This kind of pinpointing or highlighting is one way of achieving your color theme; another is gentle color washing, using pastel shades and color-tinted neutrals over the larger surface areas: such as walls, floor, ceiling and the bigger items of furniture. This creates an atmosphere or impression of a particular shade, which can either be left subtle and understated, or emphasized with furnishing element in a stronger shade of the same color. You could use tinted glazes and paints, pale fabrics or a broken paint effect &ndash; sponging, ragging and stippling all make the color softer and less clearly definable. Two-tone textures such as weaves, knits and natural blends of wool, cotton and linen are also very

effective at conjuring up a particular shade without seeming strongly self colored. This is the approach to take where you want to create a green or yellow ambience rather than making a definite statement. It works particularly well with yellow, creating a feeling of gentle sunshine, or with green for a fresh, clean look. Pink, peach or apricot are also suitable, and impart a warm, cozy glow to a room, but be careful with blue used in this way &ndash; it can work marvelously, but can also result in an over-cool, even alien atmosphere.