

## GETTING IT TOGETHER

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If you are still nervous about coordinating all the elements in your design – the paints, papers, fabrics and accessories or find it difficult to decide on a theme color, take a tip from the professionals and build up your own personalized color board of folder of samples for each room, like those shown in the Introduction. This is a task that should never be rushed. Try to tackle each step of the project at a time and don't be afraid to collect several options and live with them for a while – maybe pinned up around the house – until you are sure you have made the choice you will be happy with. If you are dithering between greens, blues or yellows, you will gradually begin to have a feeling for which looks best in the room and how they are affected by both natural and artificial light.

It is important that you collect actual samples of the furnishing and decorating options you are considering – snippets of carpet, corners of wallpaper, paint chips, swatches of fabric and so on, not just a page torn from a magazine or a brochure, as colors tend to be distorted in the printing process, and cannot offer an accurate means of matching or coordinating. Write down the code number, supplier and price (for budgeting) on the back of each of your samples, as it is easy to forget which fabric came from which shop, or what carpet offered best value. There is nothing more frustrating than spending weeks agonizing over a decision, only to find you cannot carry it through because you have no idea where the sample came from.

Once you have decided on the color key, you can begin to expand on it by building up a portfolio of complementary elements, always keeping your main color in mind so that your ideas for all other effects grow naturally from it. Once you have built up a selection of decorating and furnishing samples, put them together on a board or spread them out on the table, and you will see a more complete picture beginning to develop, which can be as subtle or as strong as you wish. You will probably also see that certain samples look out of place and fail to blend well with the others. Be firm with yourself and reject these.

Using a selection of closely allied tints from right across the spectrum of your chosen color will create a sophisticated and gentle transition from one color to the next, while a slightly different and more contrasting look will result from using colors from the upper and lower ranges only – a dark and very pale blue, for example. If you feel that still looks rather understated and perhaps a little dull, consider introducing an accent or a complementary color from the opposite side of the color wheel. These should be used only in small amounts for the best effect: white woodwork can be used to act as a highlighter, or a second color can be introduced here and there as a trim or accessory.

Another way to prevent a limited color scheme from becoming monotonous is to use a good variety of shapes and textures, so try and collect a good mixture of rough and smooth surfaces, shiny and matt finishes, plains and patterns within your sample selection. Remember also that light and position will affect both textures and colors, so make your final choice of samples in the room where you intend to use them. You will already have a clear idea of how they are going to look together, but you also need to see them on the appropriate surface. Hold up papers and fabrics intended for walls and windows vertically, and to judge the effect of flooring, tablecloths and so on, lay out samples on a horizontal surface.

The essential final touches, such as ornaments and all the little bits and pieces that give a successful scheme its character, can usually wait until the room is completed, so there is no need for a panic-stricken rush to assemble (or afford) them at the outset. By all means keep an eye open for exactly the right shade of vase or the perfect print when you are assembling your samples, but these final accessories are normally acquired slowly, and are often an individual and personal collection built up over a period of time. If the room is well planned, you will know at a glance if an item is suitable, and in this respect you should not be too fanatical about color matching and coordinating. The piece should fit in style, but over co-ordination can look lifeless.