

COLOR CUES

brushing up

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You don't have to knock down walls or raise the roof to make a small space look bigger. With the right paint shades and a few easy techniques from the pros, you can expand your horizons.



Two of a Kind ^

Minimize contrast. "If you paint the walls red and the ceiling and trim white, your eye notices where everything stops and starts," says **Aimee Desrosiers**, color expert and director of marketing for **California Paints**. To blur the boundaries in the room, opt for colors that blend easily, such as gray and silvery-blue or tone-on-tone shades, and match the window treatments and floor coverings to the walls as well.



Lighten Up ^

To visually open up a space, reserve darker shades for areas near the floor—on baseboards and wainscoting, for example—and use a lighter variation of the same color above, suggests Joa Studholme, color consultant for Farrow & Ball. Let nature be your guide when selecting hues. Pairs of earthy tones like these remind us of tall reeds sprouting up from the sand on a beach.



Object Lesson ^

Cool shades recede from the eye and warm ones spring forward, which is why the combination of pale blue walls and scarlet accessories is such a striking duo. The red gives you something to focus on, making the perimeter of the space feel even further away, **Desrosiers** explains. Her sky-blue paint pick? **California Paints' Across the Bay #DE5757**.

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Dark Secret >

Because kitchens attract crowds (they're the place where everyone gathers), even spacious ones can look cramped. The solution? Studholme recommends painting a centrally located island a deep muted blue (or other dark shade). In kitchens without islands, use the color on just the legs of a table—the idea is to keep stronger shades in the center and close to the ground. Coat surrounding walls and cabinets in paler tones of gray and cornflower. Moving the lighter hues out and away from a dark center makes the room appear wider.



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Mellow Yellow <

A room with lots of natural light always looks larger than one without. If you're not getting much wattage from Mother Nature, "you can cheat a little sunshine in," says Lisa LaPorta, a designer on HGTV's *Designed to Sell*. But yellow can be a difficult color to get right since it tends to intensify dramatically on the wall. Choose a golden shade with warm ivory or beige undertones, as opposed to a bright canary hue.

Smooth Transition >

Using a different color in every room can make the spaces in a home with an open floor plan or one where you can see from one area into another feel choppy and confined, says Desrosiers. Create interiors that flow by selecting colors that complement one another tonally. Try shades that fall next to each other in the rainbow, like pastel lime, aqua, and lemon or variations on a theme, such as soft terra-cotta, rust, and brown. ■



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