

If Your Walls Could Talk

PAINT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO HELP YOU CHILL OUT, CHEER UP, OR GET DOWN TO BUSINESS—HERE'S HOW.

By Kathleen Murray Harris

TO BUY: Light French Gray, from \$33 per gallon; sherwin-williams.com for info.

COLOR IS POWERFUL. It's often the first thing people notice when they walk through a space, and it's one of the most important building blocks of your home's personal style. But when faced with a thick book of paint chips, most people gravitate toward their favorite colors or play it safe with neutrals. Instead, consider the mood you'd like to inspire in each room. "Colors elicit feelings, jog your memory, and function as a form of self-expression," says textile designer Lori Weitzner, author of *Ode to Color: The Ten Essential Palettes of Living and Design*. We asked designers and color experts for their favorite paint colors to achieve a certain vibe. Of course, this isn't an exact science, but use these ideas as a starting point.

Relax with gray or blue.

Think of the ocean. How do you feel? "Cool, watery colors calm you," says Jessica Helgerson, an interior designer in Portland, Oregon. That's why sky blue or a neutral with an undertone (the color that's mixed with the primary color) of gray or green is common in bedrooms and yoga studios: These shades capture that soothing, serene, private-retreat vibe, says Hope Fallin, owner of Hope Fallin Color & Design in Ridgewood, New Jersey. Her favorite chill-out colors are Sherwin-Williams's Passive, a soft blue-gray with a hint of green, and Light French Gray, a classic, cool gray. Soft, watery blues, pale gray-blues (like the sky), and green-grays (like soft mint) are often associated with calming and healing and are frequently used in doctors' offices.

TO BUY: Views, \$49 per gallon; clare.com.



TO BUY: Pink Ground, from \$110 per gallon; farrow-ball.com.

Get happy with sun-kissed colors.

In spaces where you could use a pick-me-up, try warm neutrals and sun-kissed shades, like apricot, rust, and tan. Consider a nude blush, says Weitzner, like Benjamin Moore's Bashful and Farrow & Ball's Pink Ground, which have yellow undertones to prevent the color from skewing too bubble gum. Not surprisingly, yellow itself creates a cheerful vibe too. "We associate yellow with happiness and sunshine, and for many people it promotes creativity and productivity," says Sara Gore, the host of NBC's *Open House*. Choosing the right yellow can be challenging, though. "Many are too bright or too baby pastel," says Fallin. For a modern, yellow-adjacent shade, she suggests a warm beige, like Sherwin-Williams's Maison Blanche.

TO BUY: Red Earth, from \$110 per gallon; farrow-ball.com.

TO BUY: Maison Blanche, from \$33 per gallon; sherwin-williams.com for info.

Encourage easy conversation with green.

Active yet calm colors will help create a good ambience for entertaining. It may sound contradictory, but in areas like the kitchen and dining room, you want people to feel relaxed and engaged at the same time. Nature-inspired greens, like those found in bamboo leaves or sage, are perfect for your cook space, says Weitzner. They can elevate your mood without being too intense. "Greens are reminiscent of being outside, where your energy and spirits are high yet relaxed and

grounded," she explains. Try Benjamin Moore's Honeydew or Sherwin-Williams's Oh Pistachio. If you're nervous about bright colors, Weitzner says to mix your green shade with Benjamin Moore's Linen White, which takes the edge off but keeps the color clean and bright. It will turn a neon lime, for instance, into an inviting green apple.

TO BUY: Honeydew, from \$55 per gallon; benjaminmoore.com for info.



TO BUY: Valspar Signature in Green Peppercorn, from \$33 per gallon; lowes.com for info.

THE REALIST



TO BUY: Calypso Orange, from \$55 per gallon; benjaminmoore.com for info.

Be productive with bright colors.

Pops of a bright color like coral or cobalt can energize you; they work well in a home office or other space you want to feel focused in. If you're feeling adventurous, Weitzner loves a bright tangerine orange, like Benjamin Moore's Calypso Orange, which she says can encourage quick thinking and creativity. Since too much of a bright color can be intimidating—and distracting—try it out on one accent wall, suggests Weitzner. At Third Branch Creative Studio in Milwaukee, owner Elizabeth Rees used a bright yellow ombré effect to add visual interest in a subtle way. "It helps move the eye around the room, keeping clients' minds active," says Rees.

TO BUY: White Opulence, from \$55 per gallon; benjaminmoore.com for info.

Sleep better with soft pinks.

While a light gray-blue shade can be relaxing, you might also consider a slightly warmer tone for your bedroom, says Weitzner. Pick a soft neutral with a barely-there pink or purple undertone, like White Opulence by Benjamin Moore. The soothing shade will reflect light to keep the space cheery in the daytime while providing a note of calm positivity as you ease into your nighttime routine.

Feel cozy with dark blues and charcoal.

There's a move toward rich, almost black colors in dining rooms, TV rooms, and living rooms, says Nicole Gibbons, founder of Clare, an online paint retailer. You may think these shades would make a space seem smaller, but they actually do the opposite, says Helgerson. "Light reflects off dark colors to create shadows and more dynamic color, making your space appear bigger," she explains. To create this feeling of luxurious comfort, opt for a strong, cool iron gray (try Irony from Clare) or a rich, sophisticated blue that looks like warm denim (try Behr's Blueprint). While blues are typically cool colors, if they have brown undertones, they can create a warm vibe, notes Fallin. These almost cavelike colors are also great in bedrooms: "Some clients enjoy feeling like they're in a cocoon," says Fallin.

TO BUY: Irony, \$49 per gallon; clare.com.

TO BUY: Blueprint, from \$25 per gallon; behr.com.

TO BUY: Dark Night, from \$33 per gallon; sherwin-williams.com for info.



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