



Pro Paint Tips:

Take the Guesswork out of Painting Your Home



Painting your space is an exciting change – it’s an opportunity to put your splash of creativity on a space. But there’s a lot more that goes into painting a space than just putting a brush to paint, and it can sometimes feel overwhelming.

- ▶ What color do you paint the walls?
- ▶ Should you paint the trim separately?
- ▶ How do you even go about finding a painter?

Read on to get helpful tips that will take all the guesswork out of the process.



About Renée

I'm an interior designer with over 25 years of experience across the country. I excel in honoring and highlighting the architecture of a house while introducing modern shapes and colors to create a timeless feeling of home. My passion is creating spaces that blend elegant design with everyday functionality, where the end result is a home that reflects my clients. I offer online paint consultation to help homeowners maximize their homes with my design expertise. [Click here to learn more about my one-on-one paint consultations.](#)



Hiring a painter

The internet can be a blessing and a curse. Google “painter” in your area and you’ll soon be overwhelmed with hundreds of options – without really knowing who’s good. Follow these simple tips to find a good painter you can trust:

- ▶ Ask friends for a referral.
- ▶ If you’re new to an area you can go to your local Benjamin Moore or Sherwin Williams store and ask for referrals.
- ▶ Make sure the painter is licensed, and has several references. Contact references and see what they have to say.
- ▶ Google search for reviews: Keep in mind that most people have at least one or two dissatisfied customers, so check specifically for a pattern of complaint, especially in the same area.
- ▶ Talk to the painter by phone to get a feel for how they work and communicate.
- ▶ Meet at the house and review all the areas that need work, and have the painter explain their entire process.
- ▶ The painter should do the following in preparation for painting: Prepare all surfaces for new paint: Scrape off loose paint, light sanding, patching holes, taping off transition areas.



Picking the paint

This can seem like a really overwhelming decision, so I break it down to different parts for you to consider. Still can't decide? Book a one on one consultation with me and together we'll pick the best paints for your home.

1. Brand

Often painters prefer to work with a specific brand, so check with your painter. The brand name isn't nearly as important as the quality, as every brand has different levels of quality. Invest in good quality paint. Quality paint will look good for longer, so you won't have to go through this process again before you want to.

2. Sheen /finish

The paint's sheen, or finish, refers to how reflective the paint is, or the glossiness of the paint. Different areas, like the ceiling, walls and trim, typically use different sheens. These are my recommendations for which sheen goes where:

Flat sheen for ceilings:

A flat finish has very little reflection, and is closest to a matte. A flat finish hides most imperfections in walls (and all walls have imperfections), and it's easy to touch up. The downside is that it can be hard to clean because it shows scuff marks. This is perfect for the ceiling because it hides any imperfections on the surface, and the ceiling isn't often cleaned.



Eggshell for walls:

An eggshell finish is one of my favorites. It has a low reflection, so it's on the matte side of things, but an eggshell finish has a unique soft glow that can be seen as light hits it on an angle. An eggshell finish creates a wipeable surface, so it's easy to clean, and therefore ideal for walls.

Semi-Gloss sheen for trim and cabinetry:

Semi-gloss is a durable finish best used on surfaces that get a lot of wear, like cabinetry. The slight reflection on a semi-gloss highlights details in wood, which makes it a perfect finish for trim.

3. Color

There are NO rules to color. It's YOUR home and you live there, so choose colors that make you happy. You can use visuals from magazines or Pinterest if you need some inspiration, but be very careful about using the colors mentioned in the article without first sampling. The same exact shade of blue looks completely different on Florida walls than on Chicago walls.

▶ Light matters! You can fall in love with a color in a picture of a room flooded with natural light, but if you're considering that color for a dark sitting room, you may be disappointed. Colors read differently in different light. Always sample! (More on this later).

▶ Don't be afraid to use many colors. Color is a great way to create interest and infuse your home with personality.

▶ Two story homes: The colors you choose for the front hall should continue up the stairs and through to the second floor hall, so choose a color you want in both spaces.





4. Samples

ALWAYS do real samples on the walls. Ideally you want to do more than one sample on opposite walls, so you can see it in different light. Make sure you check in at different times of the day to ensure that you're happy with how the color looks in all light. Remember, color looks different in different light! Some painters will include samples in their contract and if not you can often negotiate it as part of the package. Keep in mind, however, that you'll likely be limited in the amount of samples per room. If you're doing the samples yourself, make sure to paint two coats to get full depth of color.

You can try getting peel and stick paint samples from [Samplize](#). Their samples are true to color, but they don't yet have a full selection of brands.

**Note that Samplize allows you to order paints from different companies at the same time - sounds convenient, right? The downfall: They aren't always a 100% fit to the true color. You can typically order samples directly from the paint company site, or grab them from your local hardware store.



Special areas to consider

1. Plates & Vents

Have your electrical outlets, light switch plates and vent covers removed and painted to match the surface they are on. There's nothing architecturally interesting about them, so you want them to blend in with the rest of the room. DO NOT paint the devices themselves, just the plates. This small attention to detail will make all the difference in the finished product.

Plates and vent painting is not usually included in the general estimate, so be sure to ask about it so that they can add this cost of labor to your estimate. Add it to the estimate ahead of time so you know the cost up front and the painter can give you a more accurate picture of how long the project will take.



2. Ceilings

I can count on two hands the number of times I have painted a ceiling anything but white in almost 30 years. Occasionally we will tint the ceiling color to be slightly off white, but even then it reads as essentially white. Different colored ceilings bring the height of the ceiling down, and you want your rooms to appear to be as tall as possible. The fad of coloring ceilings comes and goes, but I'm not a believer in fads, so I stick with white ceilings. Trust me on this and you'll have a home that has a timeless elegance.

3. Bathrooms & Kitchens

Bathrooms and kitchens are unique in that they both undergo more frequent and intensive cleaning, and bathrooms also have concentrated humidity that the paint must contend with. Most companies create a specific kitchen & bath paint within their line that has a higher sheen, which in turn makes it easier to clean and is moisture-wicking. Make sure to use these special paints in your kitchen and bathrooms, and to factor that into your budget.



Pro-tips & tricks

▶ Make sure you ready the house for painting. Remove all breakables and artwork from the walls. If the artwork is going back up in the same place, the painters can take care of the hooks. If you have pets in the house, keep them away. Painters will be coming in and out of the house all day, and you don't want them to accidentally let your pet out!

▶ Angles and soffits should be painted the same color as the walls. Painting them the color of the ceiling can make the room feel shorter, which is the last thing you want.

▶ Paint shoe/quarter round molding the same color as the baseboard. This will elongate the base molding. The shoe/quarter round molding is the molding closest to your floor, below the baseboard. In most traditional homes this molding is stained to match the floor, which brings the color of the floor up to the wall and shortens the baseboard. Painting it elongates everything and adds modern elegance.

▶ If your crown molding isn't interesting, it doesn't need to be painted a contrasting trim color. If your ceiling height is average and the crown molding is small and plain, then just paint it the color of the walls.

▶ Remember, you're using different sheens on trim (semi-gloss) and walls (eggshell), so even if they're painted the same color they'll still look slightly different because the light will hit the two surfaces differently.



▶ Skip out on painting door hinges unless they're already painted. The paint will chip and wear off which will require ongoing maintenance, but if they're already painted then removing the paint could be as equally time consuming and expensive. If you're lucky enough to have a historical house, then it's worth chipping off old paint to see what treasure you can find underneath.

▶ Built-ins are wood, so painters will assume they should be painted the color of the trim. Think about if that's the look you want. If they're just functional and not architecturally interesting, or if they cover an entire wall and painting them a different color from the wall would chop up the room, then you may not want them to be the color of the trim. You can paint them the same color as the walls but in a semi-gloss finish to add slight difference.

▶ Spindles and risers on stairs are considered trim unless you choose a separate color. I often paint a banister a glossy black if the stain of the wood has no personality.

▶ If you have dated looking stained wood paneling, painting it will transform the entire look without the expense of removing it, though some extra prep may be needed.



Those are some of my top tips and tricks for painting your house.

Still overwhelmed with paint options?

Unsure what will look good with the furniture you already have?

[Click here](#) to learn more
about my one-on-one paint
consultations.

I'll view your home virtually and together we'll pick out colors that bring out the best in your home. I'll even take care of sending samples your way! So what are you waiting for? Let's bring some color into your life.



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