

What Color Shall I Paint the Walls?

The human eye can see more than 16 million colors. That's a lot of color mistakes waiting to happen. Perhaps a color chef, whipping up scrumptiously colored spaces, is the way to address this dilemma. And where would I find a color chef? If you don't have a color chef, try the following tip that colorists use frequently, but rarely talk about. Perhaps they don't talk about it, because it comes "naturally," or shall we say from many years of studying and doing.

Coloring a space is as easy as one, two, three, or shall we say, 60, 30, 10. Take a look at photos in your favorite decorating magazines. Notice the rooms that speak to you. They are usually divided into color percentages of 60, 30, and 10. It is a human tendency to respond to color combinations in this ratio. Here's how it works.

Usually 60 percent of a space is the dominant color, 30 percent is the secondary color and 10 percent is the accent color or colors. Consider this example. An outfit of clothing could be 60 percent as the suit color, 30 percent the shirt or blouse, and 10 percent the tie. Translated into a room setting, that would mean 60 percent of the room's color is the walls, floors and ceiling, 30 percent is the furniture, and 10 percent is the accessories.

There is also an old adage held to by some colorists that by adding a small amount of black, you clarify and enhance all the other colors in the space. Although I have personally never been taught this, recently I noticed that I have been doing this unconsciously for years.

Most people err, not with color, necessarily, but with color value. Value is the relative lightness or darkness of a color. Sometimes you will see a space that is not balanced in terms of value; one side of the room is too dark, the other side, being too light in value, tends to float away visually.

A technique that, not surprisingly, follows the 60/30/10 pattern and that can help to understand color, is one employed by Mother Nature, the pro's favorite colorist. Think sky and sea (60), trees and grass (30), and flowers (10).

I have not seen any governmental building codes that regulate house colors, and I haven't counted what percentage houses might be. But you could choose your home's exterior color by deciding whether or not you want to be the sky, the trees, or a flower!