



THE POWER OF PAINT

David Oliver, design director of Paint & Paper Library and self-styled 'rock star of colour', explains how to give your home an instant uplift with paint

1 If there's a shade you lust after – canary yellow, say, or deep violet – but you're not brave enough to use it, start with a hidden space such as inside cupboards or an area you don't use much like a passageway. I painted my utility room hot pink.

2 Colour doesn't exist in isolation – one shade can look fine until you put it against another. Nervous? Choose a system such as our 'Architectural Colours' of chromatically graduated pastel whites and neutrals. It's a simple way of uniting all the elements in a room so that they work in harmony.

3 Paint skirting boards a slightly darker shade than the walls: it'll make the room look bigger. A common mistake is to use white. Don't. It creates a shrinking 'picture frame' effect. A darker colour will make the perimeter of the room look further away.

4 Never try paint samples on a flat surface. Use a wooden box instead, that way you can predict how colours deepen and change in light and far corners.

5 Re-enamelling the bath is the most dramatic way I know to uplift a tired bathroom. I once spray-painted mine gold. You can also buy specialist paints to revamp wall tiles.

6 For open-plan living spaces where it's tricky to incorporate more than one colour scheme, try varying 'the instrument' of design instead. So use paint in the living space, fabric on the bedroom walls, wallpaper in the study and tiles in the kitchen, all in the same colours.

7 For rooms with a garden aspect, choose hues that complement what's going on outside. Soft yellow or duck-egg blue are perfect because these sit next to green on the colour wheel. Earth shades such as terracotta and stone also work well.

8 Think about the function of a room and when it's used. A dining room that's mainly lit by candles can handle oxblood or squid ink hues that a living room couldn't. A space where you need to concentrate, such as an office, works best with brights such as yellow or orange.

9 Rather than white, paint the ceiling a slightly lighter shade than the walls to subtly change the mood of a room. For small spaces, use the same colour on the ceiling – it creates the illusion of space.

10 For a quick makeover, paint your front door and express your personality to the world. Or paint all the interior doors – I prefer them to be slightly darker than the architrave. 01603 400777; paint-paper.co.uk

PAINT SHOPS

Designers Guild

If it's zing you're after, this is the place to go. Although its range of 98 colours includes plenty of neutrals, it's the luminous brights that steal the show. We recommend Borghese Lime, Fuchsia or Poppy... sunglasses at the ready! designersguild.com

Earthborn Paints

Specialists in environmentally friendly paints. Its claypaint is a good alternative to emulsion, free of toxins and recommended for allergy sufferers. For die-hard eco warriors, try Casein paint, made from milk proteins. It's supplied as a white powder, which you can add Earthborn pigments to. earthbornpaints.co.uk

Farrow & Ball

Many cheaper brands have attempted to copy its signature muted shades, but none have come close. Iconic colours such as Rectory Red, Lulworth Blue and Down Pipe Grey have a timeless quality that work equally well in an urban Hoxton loft or a period home. farrow-ball.com