

HOME / HOUSE & HOME



Stephanie Larsen/ Laura Moss

# Torn Between Ivory, Cream, and Cool Undertones? Designers Share Their Tricks to Finding the Perfect White

BY KELSEY MULVEY

<https://paradehomeandgarden.com/home/how-to-choose-white-paint>

MAY 23, 2025 6:15 AM EDT

When it comes to choosing the perfect [color](#) for your room, a fresh coat of white paint is like the design-equivalent to...well, a basic white T-shirt. It can be dressed up or down, goes with everything, and typically manages to make a space feel light and airy. But while white is definitely one of the (if not, *the*) most popular paint hues, it's not exactly a one-shade-suits-all situation.

Turns out, white is a surprisingly complicated color: There are warm whites, cool whites, ivory, cream, and virtually everything in between. If we're being totally honest, the whole thing can be overwhelming. So how does one even *begin* to find the right white for your space? It might seem like a challenge, but we have you covered. To help, we asked two designers about their top tips and tricks for choosing the perfect shade. Whether you opt for a cool-toned white or something creamier, one thing's for sure: The incredibly daunting task of choosing the right white just got a lot easier.

# Compare a Couple Shades

Think you found the perfect white? [Stephanie Larsen](#) encourages you to test it out. According to the Arizona-based designer, one of the biggest mistakes a person can make is *not* swatching their desired paint shade on their wall. Sure, it might require some additional legwork; however, Larsen says it allows you to see how a shade will interact with your room's natural and artificial lighting as well as the rest of your decor.

If you *really* want to ensure the perfect fit, why not swatch a few other white shades? Turns out, going the extra mile can help you pick up undertones you maybe didn't detect on your fan deck. "Cool whites typically have a blue or green undertone, while warm whites hold a bit of yellow or orange in their [coloring](#)," Larsen explains. "It's only by comparing them that you can find a match that's a true, authentic white for your space."

# Factor In Your Footprint

Size matters—yes, even when selecting the perfect white paint. “The larger a room is, the more you want to avoid using a pure white in the space,” Larsen says. “It can make it feel cavernous and cold.” Instead, the designer says she prefers warmer creams and ivories—and encourages you to consider the same.

“With home design, the focus should almost always be on whites that feel cozy and inviting,” she says. “Cool whites can sometimes feel quite industrial, which can be counterproductive to the atmosphere you’re trying to cultivate at home.” While cooler tones *can* work better in a smaller hallway or powder room, be sure to inject some personality with a [gallery wall](#) or [house plants](#).

# Create Contrast

Just because the professionals generally prefer warmer shades doesn't mean cooler whites should be *completely* avoided at all costs. For a neutral space that feels dynamic and design-minded, Larsen likes to create some contrast.