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How to Pick the Perfect Neutral Paint Color

FIGURING OUT YOUR UNDERTONES



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What started out as a hobby, helping friends and family decorate their homes, became Kristen Rinn Design in 2011. Located in Austin, Texas, Kristen is known for creating Inspiring Interiors with a personalized approach that complements your unique style and needs.



HOW TO PICK THE PERFECT NEUTRAL PAINT COLOR

Most homes today have open floor plans and therefore the walls of the adjoining rooms should be painted the same neutral color to create cohesiveness. But which one?

Before you can pick a paint you must determine the undertone in your fixed finishes like your carpet, backsplash tile in your kitchen or your floor tile or your fireplace tile or stone. If the tile or stone is staying, your paint needs to share the same undertone.

WHAT IS THE UNDERTONE?

There are three basic undertones. Beige, gray and taupe, which is a combination of beige and gray with a hint of purple. To determine which undertone you have answer these questions:

1. Does your tile have brown in it, like travertine or is it a ceramic that looks like travertine? Is your carpet brownish beige? Is your fireplace made out of natural stone? If you answered yes to any of those questions then use HC-81 Manchester Tan or SW7036 Accessible Beige on your walls. If you are painting your kitchen cabinets and trim, use an off-white like SW7004 Snowbound or CC-40/967 Cloud White.

2. Do you have Carrara marble backsplash or counters? Or blue-gray carpet? Use HC-169 Covington Gray on the walls and a white with a blue undertone like OC-64 Pure White on the cabinets and trim.

3. Is the undertone of your tile and carpet neither beige or blue gray? They might be taupe. Pale Oak OC-20 might be the answer for your walls.

NOT SURE WHICH UNDERTONE YOU HAVE?

If you are not sure if you have beige, gray or taupe undertones in your tile or counter or stone, get samples of Manchester Tan, Covington Gray and Pale Oak and paint them on a piece of poster board and place them against the tile or counter. Which paint color most closely matches the tile? That should be your wall color.

Do you have off-white cabinets, white subway tile, black counters, white or gray quartz counters and wood floor? If so, you have much more flexibility with your paint color. You can use a warm gray like SW7029 Agreeable Gray, HC-172 Revere Pewter or HC-173 Edgecomb Gray.

INTERESTED IN PAINTING YOUR WALLS WHITE?

SW7008 Alabaster is a good creamy white that won't feel too cold. OC-118/2144-70 Snowfall White is a good white for cabinets and trim. If you want more contrast, go bolder and paint your trim and cabinets a darker color like HC-168 Chelsea Gray or HC-166 Kendall Charcoal.

But buyer beware: only paint your walls white if you have wood flooring, furniture, drapes and art that you love. There is a reason why art galleries are white. They want you to focus on the art and not the wall color. In the same way white is a blank canvas for your room and will draw the eye to your furniture and accessories. If you are still living with old, out-dated furniture, paint your walls a darker neutral like the ones mentioned above.

LIGHTENING UP YOUR WALLS

If you really want to lighten up your walls, I personally think light greiges are better than whites. They seem white but feel cozier and more welcoming. OC-23 Classic Gray is a good greige wall color that will work with beige fixed elements like travertine tile or beige or taupe carpet. It also looks good with marble. An off-white like OC-130 Cloud White will work on your cabinets and trim. OC-51 Intense White is a grayed white with a slight blue undertone that works with Carrara marble counters and white wall tile. You could pair it with true white like OC-65 Chantilly Lace for your trim and cabinets.



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