

**4** Follow the rule of three. When you pick a color, use it at least three times in a room.

**5** "Put things in context. If it's a fabric that's going on a horizontal surface, look at it horizontally. Whatever it is, step back six feet and look at it from a distance. Looking at a swatch, a pillow, a curtain, or a rug six inches from your eye is different than seeing it as you step into the room."

**JANIE HIRSCH**  
Atlanta designer

**6** Camouflage a hodgepodge of surfaces—an awkward dormer door, wimpy crown molding, or an ugly chair rail—by painting them the same color as the wall. They'll fade away. Try this go-anywhere neutral: **CREAM WARE BHG804 EDITORS' CHOICE PAINT COLORS**, [bhglivebetter.com](http://bhglivebetter.com)



**7** "Think of hallways as palate cleansers—the sorbet that's served before diving into the next course. Keeping them neutral allows you to branch into any color in rooms that flow off them."

**BARRY DIXON**, Washington, D.C., designer

**8** Don't sweat slight color variations between fabrics and walls. "The best rooms are slightly off—stronger, lighter, softer, just not a spot-on match to a swatch," says **Sasha Emerson**, a Los Angeles designer.

**9** When you're spreading color around a room, think about proportion. If you're using three colors, try a 70/20/10 distribution, with the highest percentage going to the lightest color. For two colors, go 70/30.



**10** Store fabric, wallpaper, and paint swatches in a notebook, binder, or pencil pouch so they're handy when you shop. To visualize your scheme, cut fabric swatches (or brush paint strokes) relative to the size they're used in the room—large ones for curtains, small ones for pillows.

**11** "Break up a room of matchy-matchy wood furniture with one painted piece. It doesn't have to be a bold color. I like to combine natural wood tones with black."

**MELISSA BIRDSONG**  
Lowe's vice president of trend design and brand

**12** "I'm always drawn to colors I wear. Look in your closet. You are your own best inspiration for color."

**BHG reader COMECA BRANNON**,  
Texarkana, Texas

**13** The back of a fabric, curtain, comforter, or area rug is sometimes more interesting—and toned down—than the front. If no telltale signs like hems will show, go ahead and flip it. Designers do it, and so can you.

from  
the  
pros

**14** If you could choose just one paint color for walls, what would it be?

**CLASSIC GRAY 1548, BENJAMIN MOORE**  
"Even on a dreary day this gray looks good."  
**MARY HICKEY**  
Minneapolis designer

**SAVORY BEIGE 3002-10C, VALSPAR**  
"Even the biggest color-phobes can commit to this pale tan."  
**ELAINE GRIFFIN**  
New York City designer

**SEA SALT SW 6204, SHERWIN-WILLIAMS**  
"Soft, soothing, and like sea glass where it can go blue or green."  
**JANIE HIRSCH**  
Atlanta designer

**BLUE ARROW 5001-3C, VALSPAR**  
"Easy on the eye, easy to live with. It's a robin egg's blue-green with a bit of muddiness."  
**MELISSA BIRDSONG**  
Lowe's vice president of trend design and brand

**CLAY BEIGE OC-11, BENJAMIN MOORE**  
"A neutral that's not boring! It's a chameleon. It can read warm or cool and looks great in any light."  
**MANDY LOWRY**  
Atlanta designer

See these great go-to colors from the pros at [BHG.com/procolortips](http://BHG.com/procolortips)