



Seeing White

Love It or Leave It, but Don't Fear It

By Kris Brigden

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The last time you saw an all-white room did you feel comfortable, or did you feel timid and afraid to relax? White is one of those colours that many homeowners fear.

But why do we shy away from white? White is an extremely complex shade. There are literally thousands of paint colours in white – some are stark and antiseptic, some are creamy, some are grey. Everyone has an opinion on decorating with white. Your neighbour will tell you it is cold, your best friend will tell you it isn't functional. Often when younger people are decorating their first home they can't afford to buy quality stand-out furnishings, so the trick is to add colour on the walls to create style that detracts attention from the furnishings. Alternatively, white paint can turn a garage sale find into something to talk about. As we get older and can afford to collect quality pieces, a home can become like a gallery. You want a nice white canvas for your hard-earned furnishings.

White is a very personal choice. It can be the perfect decision depending on your application. White has made a comeback. The beach look is hot right now. We look at magazine shots of a fresh white room and admire the calm and style it presents. Then we stop and think, "The kids would trash that white slip-covered sofa," or "My place would look dirty all the time." But there are many ways to get wow from white rooms without the fear.

Follow these design tips to help you achieve white bliss

1. Choose the white paint you are most comfortable with. Then go ahead and paint it all – ceilings, trim, baseboards. Even whitewashing an old floor that needs replaced can change a room's appearance for a fraction of the price.
2. Buy décor items carefully, making sure that white is the predominant colour.



3. Group white items together in vignettes on coffee tables, hutches and bookshelves.
4. Add some wood, either in a coffee or end table. It doesn't matter what stain strength or wood you choose – mahogany, driftwood or walnut. The wood creates a stark contrast that makes white whiter.
5. Glass, mirrors and ambient or lamp lighting reflect white well. Add elements of these items wherever you can.
6. Add texture in lieu of colour. If your accessories are all white, choose a different texture or pattern to create layering and interest.
7. Choose one or two other colours to offset your white. Let's say you opt for navy and soft gray. Instead of a white sofa, the sofa is navy velvet and the occasional chairs are soft gray leather. Remember, though, to add the white and navy or white and gray throws and pillows.

As a designer, I know firsthand that white can make anything old look new, fresh and clean. White can be a backdrop for fabulous, and it's a bold statement without being bold.

White – love it or fear it – can be your best friend when decorating. With practice, you can overcome the fear and embrace the possibilities that white offers.



