

how to... decorate with white

Cool, calm and clean it may be but characterful and cosy too? Top designers tell how to make this neutral anything but stark

Cornicing and walls in Clean White pure flat emulsion, £51 for 2.5ltr, paintandpaperlibrary.com



1 a fabulous foundation

What you don't want is for the abundance of white to look stark, flat or minimal. It needs to have soul and tell a story. Clean White from Paint & Paper Library is a favourite when I'm looking for a pure white for ceilings or woodwork that can be combined with other colours – and can work across all tones.

Clare Gaskin, founder, Clare Gaskin Interiors

2 pole position

First assess which way the room faces. In the UK, northern light is least affected by seasonal changes for example, whereas a room facing west will get a warmer, mellower afternoon light. Then determine what time of day the room will be most inhabited and whether you want something cooler or warmer in tone.

Harriet Anstruther, founder, Harriet Anstruther Studio

3 base tones

Consider the purpose of the space – rooms that are centred around focus and concentration, such as offices or kitchens, are better suited to cooler tones of white, creating a bright atmosphere. Meanwhile, rooms designed for relaxation, such as bedrooms and bathrooms, are better suited to a warm white with a yellow or pink base.

Kelly Wearstler, founder, Kelly Wearstler

4 depth of character

The most important element when decorating with white is creating depth through a collection of textures. Plaster, white linen, white painted brick or floorboards will create contrast. All white interiors with a selection of wood furniture pieces really anchor a space. I have painted many rooms and floors white, and the trick is to embrace the wear and tear, once the fresh coat of paint wears in a little. That's when it gets good.

Lyndsay Caleo Karol, creative director, The Brooklyn Home Company

5 whiter shade of pale

There are countless shades of white so it's important to sample before you decide on the shade for you. I'd steer clear of a standard decorator's white, which can look stark and temporary. For modern spaces, introduce a variety of tones, mixing woods and metals and a mixture of shapes to prevent things feeling flat. **Sheena Murphy, founder, Nune**



Sheena says white can actually be soft, inviting and cocooning – if you get the shade right

Southbank Place
by Qatari Diar,
designed by Elicyon



6

mix with colour

White is known for being reflective of its surroundings, so check samples in situ before making a decision on materials and placement, so you can test the way the sun falls. Taupe, camel or soft grey colourings work particularly well with white. Colours such as burnt orange and terracotta also suit a white scheme.

Charu Gandhi, founder and director, Elicyon

7 different finishes

It's worth using a clay or lime paint, such as Bauwerk for a little extra texture and to prevent the room from looking clinical. Old White by Farrow & Ball is a warm shade that works well in north-facing rooms. Also choose varying shades of soft white for the skirting boards, walls and ceiling.

Tiffany Duggan, founder, Studio Duggan

8 look to nature

We use earthy, muted tones to create calm and soft spaces, then add a coloured trim for a touch of playfulness. For more warmth, we'd recommend a natural material such as sisal, which works well in both contemporary and classic homes.

Camilla Clarke, creative director, Albion Nord

9 a glowing choice

When choosing lighting for a bright white space, accent lighting is essential. From table lamps next to the sofa, to floor lamps in the corner, introducing pools of light helps create a gorgeous warm glow.

Lucy St George, co-founder, Rockett St George

10 light and shade

If it's a high traffic area, first decipher if white will be practical. There are solutions, such as furniture with machine-washable covers and applying intelligent emulsions to the walls, which all help to mitigate potential mess. Introduce mirrors and brassy accents to reflect more light.

Rose Murray, director, These White Walls