



FRESH Colors

FOR EXTERIORS WITH CURB APPEAL



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Introduction



Your home makes a statement. It tells the world something about the personality of the people who live inside. Whether you're building new or renovating, each product and color choice can give your house style while enhancing its curb appeal and resale value.

The problem is that, if you are like most homeowners, choosing the materials and products is more straightforward than picking the color. Choosing a color for one item can be difficult, and selecting several exterior colors can be daunting.

The good news is that choosing the right color for each element of your home – roofing, siding, doors, windows, shutters, trim, and accents – doesn't have to be complicated. All it takes is some fresh thinking.

As a certified color professional, I use the FRESH approach to select colors for a home exterior. By following the steps in this guidebook, you can use the same process to choose colors for your house and pick the perfect colors for your home exterior.

When searching for an ideal color combination, consider the personal statement you want to make with your home's exterior. Do you want your house to have a stately and elegant appearance or a cute and storybook-like feel? Will a natural, toned-down color match your vision, or is a bright, beach-inspired hue a better choice? Having a clear idea of the overall style you want to convey will guide you towards the best material and color options.

One of the easiest ways to determine your design preferences is to look at other houses that appeal to you. Identify what you like about each one. Is it the overall color scheme, or the historic style? Maybe it looks friendly and welcoming? Take note of these features to help guide your own design choices.

You purchased your home because you enjoyed the surroundings and neighborhood. Walking or driving around your home is often the best place to start your search for color ideas. Houses within an area are also often similar in style. Looking at what your neighbors have done with their homes can serve as inspiration for your own home's exterior.

Do you prefer homes with contrasting shutters and front doors, or do you prefer a color scheme with closely related colors? To find out, take pictures of colors and color combinations that you find attractive.

Once you have a collection of images, look at the homes side-by-side. You may notice similarities that you didn't see when looking at them individually.

After you have defined your style, the next step is to consider the five keys to FRESH exterior colors:

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Fixed
Features

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Regional
Colors

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Style of
the Home

H

Historic and
HOA Colors

Fixed Features



Fixed features are important to consider as you select your colors. These include items that rarely, if ever, change on a home exterior, such as:

- Brick or stonework
- Primary and accent roofing
- Window grids, if not a light neutral
- Any other architectural elements that will not change

A home is only a blank canvas if you build a house from the ground up. Otherwise, there are many things to consider when selecting colors, and fixed features are among the most influential.

Fixed features can provide an excellent source of color direction for your siding color, which will likely change over the years. Although your fixed features may be made of different materials, they usually have a unifying color or color cast. Once you identify that color, you can use other elements with the same color, color cast, or undertone in your color scheme.

New colors don't need to match existing shades, but they should harmonize with them. Take inventory of the colors in your home's fixed features. What color is your roof? Are there bricks or stones on your facade? What about the window frames? The color of each of these areas of your exterior will become part of your overall color plan.

Look again at your home's fixed features. You will likely see some repetition of color tones. It is this repetition that allows different materials and textures to work well together. When choosing colors for items such as your roof, find a color or variety of colors that also includes the predominant color or color cast of the existing permanent elements.



Start with the largest features first when choosing colors for your home's exterior. If your home has brick or stone, begin there. The most significant fixed feature for all other houses is the roof.

Roofing materials are rarely a flat or solid color. Look closely to see what you can detect up close that isn't apparent from a distance. Premium roofing products often have color variations that are part of the product's beauty.

If your home is brick or has a partial brick exterior, note the primary color and color cast. Many bricks are red but have a golden-yellow or beige cast. Include one or both colors in your roofing, siding, or accents.

If stonework is prominent on or around your home, look at the overall stone color first. Is it gray, brown, green, peach, etc.? Next, see what colors stand out from the other stones. A deep shade of this color might work for your front door or shutters.

Repeating the colors or color cast from the fixed features begins to tie your color scheme together visually. If all the permanent elements from the roof down harmonize, you are well on your way to creating an appealing exterior color scheme. Plus, you'll have great flexibility if you change your home's siding or accent colors.

When all the fixed features have a cohesive color story, it opens up your options for a siding color. If your fixed features are gray or have a gray color cast, just about any color family will work. Brown or warmer colors often work well with siding colors that are also warm.

Regional Colors

When choosing the color scheme for your home's exterior, it's important to consider the physical location of your house. For example, a brighter terra cotta color may seem out of place in northern climates but could be an excellent choice for areas with intense sunlight in the Southwest.

Regional color preferences are influenced by a blend of natural characteristics, such as climate, topography, landscape, and quality of natural light, as well as an area's housing styles, available materials, and cultural history.

Across the country, homes in the Northeast tend to have traditional colors with brighter accents. White with black shutters, gray with a red front door, or natural stain with green trim are examples of schemes you might find in the New England region. In the Midwest, popular colors include white, tan, and gray. The Southeast also has these colors, along with tans, greens, blues, and grays in coastal areas.

In the Northwest, houses are often natural gold-based with green hues that reflect the colors found in the local environment. Nature also influences home colors in the mountain states, where the colors of stone, rock, and natural woods lead the color schemes.

Southwestern houses tend to have neutral sandy or sun-drenched terra cotta colors accented with coral, turquoise, brown, and green. While these colors are still rooted in nature, they tend to have more vibrant hues that won't pale in the bright sunlight.



Environment and Surroundings



Consider the overall look of your neighborhood when choosing colors for your home's exterior. Look for colors that express your style, complement the surroundings, and harmonize with nearby houses. The goal is to choose colors that will stand out while still fitting in.

Your home's natural setting and landscaping are also important considerations. If you have beautiful flowerbeds or shrubs, choose colors that will complement and highlight their colors. For example, if you have a prize-winning selection of red and pink roses, consider a cream or natural shade to "frame" your horticultural creations. Avoid using colors that are too dark, such as deep blues or greens, as they may make the plants and shrubs go unnoticed.

On the other hand, if your home is a mid-tone green, tan, or gray, surrounding trees could camouflage your home most of the year. In this case, choosing a contrasting color such as barn red, or Williamsburg blue can help your home stand out from the trees.

Keep in mind that heavily wooded lots will make colors appear darker due to shading. If you want a medium color, try sampling both the mid-tone and a lighter variation of the same color. You may be surprised by how much darker the paint looks when viewed in a shady area. Also, consider seasonal changes when selecting colors. When leaves are off the trees or the sun is low in the sky, these conditions can change the look of the colors on your home.

Style of the House



The architectural style of your home is an essential aspect of your color scheme. The colors you choose must fit your neighborhood and your home's design.

Start by determining the style of your home. Is it Traditional, Tudor, Cape Cod, Ranch, Split Level, Colonial, Victorian, Southwestern, or Coastal? Select colors and materials that complement your home's look and architecture rather than vice versa. You'll find that colors can vary depending on the home's style.

For Tudor and Craftsman-style houses, dark trim colors like brown, maroon, deep olive, and green work well.

Georgian and Colonial Revival houses typically have light colors like white, gray, gray-blue, gray-green, or yellow on the body, with white trim and window sashes, along with dark shutters and doors.

Modern houses with light neutrals may have dark sashes and bold, bright, primary color accents.

Federal-style houses with pale or light colors, such as whites or pale gray, have lines and forms that stand out.

Greek Revival houses painted white, off-white, or gray with shutter and window sashes painted in a dark contrasting color, such as green or black, create an off-white contrast.

During the Victorian era, houses followed a three-color paint scheme, with one color for the siding, another for the trim, and a third for the door and shutters. Only later, homeowners added color to Victorian homes, leading to the multi-colored schemes known as “Painted Ladies.”



Historic and HOA Colors



Using historic colors can allow you to create a timeless design for your home, regardless of its age. Traditional color schemes convey a sense of stability and permanence, as they have stood the test of time and are likely to remain stylish for years to come. The good news is that most popular exterior paint colors have their roots in the past. Even if your home isn't in a historic district, you can draw inspiration from these schemes, styles, and elements to create a classic look.

While you want your home's exterior to reflect your personality, you may not have complete freedom with your color choices. Some neighborhoods have pre-approved color palettes for houses to ensure uniformity in the community. Both older and newer homes may be subject to regulations from a homeowner association (HOA) or historic district. Before making your final color selections, make sure you understand any rules or approvals required by these organizations.

Following these guidelines may limit your creativity, but they serve to maintain the neighborhood's uniformity or protect the historic nature of the area. However, you will likely still have enough options to make your home stand out from your neighbors'.

Typically, a designer puts together the approved color palette for the HOA, choosing colors that harmonize with each other and work well with the materials and fixed features, while also satisfying a majority of homeowners.

Create Your Color Scheme

You've started brainstorming ideas for your color scheme, using the FRESH approach to consider the top five areas that will most influence your home's colors. Now it's time to bring together everything you've learned about your home and potential color options and create the perfect color palette.

It's natural to research, gather, and think about your color and product choices simultaneously. An excellent tool to help you imagine your new exterior is the [DaVinci Visualizer](#). It has never been easier to see how color can transform your home. Once you're ready to make final decisions, please look at large samples of each color and material.



How to Choose Your Colors

Select colors in the following order for the most successful result.

1

Find options for your primary colors that harmonize with your brick or stone if your house has these fixed features.

2

Look at the colors alongside your roofing. The roof covers a large section of the visual field of your home's exterior. Even if you are not replacing it, the roofing color needs to coordinate with the other colors in the palette. Focus first on these elements. Once you find a color(s) that works well with these fixed features, the decisions for your trim, window grids, and door colors will more quickly fall into place.

3

Consider the window grids. Are they contrasting or is it an element that fades into the scheme? When window grids are a distinct color, they weigh into your color scheme decisions. White, off-white, and putty fade into the house. You don't have to consider their color when planning your scheme. The grids are often the same or close in color to the trim, but they do not need to match. Any difference you see up close will not be noticeable once you step back.

4

Lastly, select the accent colors. If your home has shutters, it's time to choose their color. You can pick a dark shade of the roof color to bring that color onto the house. For example, navy shutters with a red front door are classic. Or deep green shutters with a yellow front door are very welcoming. Choose colors that harmonize with your selected colors and give the palette personality.

Getting It Right



Determining how a color and finish will look on your home is difficult, if not impossible, without looking at a sample of the roofing and other exterior products or painting a section of the house. It's always best to obtain physical samples to give you an idea of the full impact of your selected mix of colors and patterns.

To get it right, follow these steps:

- Arrange to get samples of paint options and exterior materials.
- Begin by looking at samples of the exterior materials alongside the house paying attention to how they look with the other fixed features. Also look at the product in the location and orientation you plan to install it. For example, siding perpendicular to the ground, or roofing overhead and at a slope.
- Sample paint by applying large swatches directly to the surfaces of your house. Find a location where the body, trim, and accent colors are adjacent and visible when standing at least 15 to 20 feet away. Paint each color on the house section where you plan to use it, placing a large sample of the body color between two trim pieces.
- Look at your samples early in the day for the most accurate idea of the color. Later in the day, the more intense sun may wash the colors out, and the colors will appear muted in the dimmer evening light.
- Live with the samples for a few days, viewing them up close and at a distance during different times of the day. You might discover that a color you thought was perfect in the morning looks entirely different in the waning afternoon light.

The direction and amount of light hitting each side of the house differs and can make the color look slightly different. Once you select colors, add paint samples on the remaining sides of your home to confirm that you're pleased with the colors in all locations and lighting conditions.

By following these simple steps, you have made great choices and found a color scheme that works beautifully for you and your home. It feels great to know that you have selected a new color scheme and will be happy with the colors for the life of the quality exterior products you are purchasing, some of which come with lifetime warranties.

And all it took was a little FRESH thinking!

About the Author



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Kate Smith is a well-recognized color expert sought out for her unmatched ability to show homeowners how to put together a FRESH color scheme for their home's exterior.

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It was very important to us to have a roofing product that resembled the original slate on the home when we purchased it. We wanted to keep the look and character of the house the same. We're very pleased with the appearance of the simulated slate shingles. The color blend we selected has nicely accented the color of the home's brick siding and helped pull the entire exterior renovation together.

~ Doug Miller



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