

7 colour wonders

With the ability to change our perception of a room's size, style, ambience and even temperature, colour is your secret weapon in bathroom design. We reveal the seven secrets to colour success

WORDS VANESSA KEYS



style secret 1

Reinvent classic black and white

The ultimate in elegance, black manages to find a balance between demure and dramatic, and acts as a brilliant backdrop to your accent colours and accessories. To help increase the sense of height and space in a moody room, a white ceiling is a classic colour trick. If your bathroom is well ventilated, consider adding curtains for warm appeal. Textured fabrics add opulence, while swathes of diaphanous fabric give a sense of old-world glam.

tip Black absorbs a lot of light so use it in bathrooms with a good source of natural light, such as a bank of louvred windows or an overhead sky window. You don't want your room to appear small and claustrophobic. "If you're lacking natural sunlight, position warm lighting – with a dimmer switch – over the vanity and shower to make the rich tones sparkle and ward off any possibility of the room becoming dull," advises interior designer Penny del Castillo. >



style secret 2

Use cool colours to create a calming bathing zone

"Distinct zones are becoming increasingly common in the bathroom," explains Belinda Geels of Reece. "One popular 'zone' is the wet room, an open-plan shower area without a conventional shower screen or base." Colour is a brilliant way to demarcate zones without the need for additional walls or panels. "Defining the shower stall walls and floors gives a seemingly straightforward bathroom layout a sense of theatrical style," explains interior designer Penny. "Border tiles encompassing two individual floor areas visually add to the separation, making them feel like singular rooms."

tip Cool colours with low reflective value – such as blues and greens – will bring a sense of serenity to your wet room. "Theory tells us that each colour creates a different mood," says Sue Strickland of Inspirations Paint & Colour. "Greens are perceived as healing and are extremely liveable, bringing the tranquility of the garden indoors." She also notes that blue lowers your heart rate and prompts your body to release calming chemicals.

PHOTOGRAPHY (BOTTO M) POLLY WREFFORD/LIVING ETC/IPC + SYNDICATION

style secret 3

Mix contrasting colours to convey depth

Saturated shades of colour played against crisp white is a foolproof way to create depth in the bathroom. To make a bathroom sparkle, choose two contrasting colours, such as emerald green and a cool white; for a more subtle sense of depth, choose two complementary colours, such as steel grey and dusky blue. "For maximum impact, use maximum contrast," says Penny. "Whatever the palette you start with as the backdrop, the contrasting colour should be at least four shades lighter. To add a heightened sense of depth, play around with combinations of accessories that are the same colour as the background. This will layer and reinforce the dominant colour's importance in the scheme."

tip Even if you prefer an all-white bathroom, it's worth introducing neutral accents and accessories to soften the look. To avoid coldness due to too much icy white, simply add touches of soft brown and beige to splashbacks, shelves or even accessories, such as towels and bathmats. This understated colour combination draws in the eye and creates a feeling of space and depth in the bathroom.





style secret 4

Steal colour cues from nature to soothe the senses

Embrace the rich colours of nature to create a serene pamper zone. A combination of earthy browns, yellows, reds and greens may not sound terribly appealing on paper, but when used in the right shades – and in the right medium – it can induce the heart-warming lift that only the Australian landscape can bring. Begin by choosing a dominant colour – earthy browns add a sense of stability, while a rustic red toned down with a smudge of brown will ignite the senses. Sunny shades of mango instantly lift the spirits in bathrooms starved of natural sunlight, and strong, lush greens bring you in tune with Mother Nature. Once you've picked your dominant colour, use a colour wheel to find complementary shades that will work as gentle accent pieces; visit homebeautiful.com.au to download our colour wheel.

tip Introducing colour accents in complementary tones means you'll end up with a cosy bathroom. Remember, the brighter the colour, the more light it will reflect, resulting in tired eyes and sharp shadows – a disaster when attempting morning rituals such as applying make-up or shaving. >

style secret 5

Add texture with mosaics

The beauty of coloured mosaic tiles lies within the diversity of application. They can be the design focal point of the room – think of a feature wall clad in fire-engine red – or used in subtle hues of blue and green to create a simple splashback or border pattern. Due to their intricate size and high-gloss finish, even plain white mosaics capture instant attention; a shower cubicle dressed from head to toe in crisp alabaster mosaics will turn everyday bathing into a spa experience. You can up the luxe factor by introducing a feature wall with a sequence of small glass mosaics, such as this blend from Bisazza (right). This colour scheme of white and olive is mimicked in the larger tiles on the bath surround and flooring.

tip When choosing a mosaic blend, such as the selection from Bisazza (call (02) 9838 9233 or visit bisazza.com), the tiles are arranged according to subtle gradations of colour. This produces a full tonal range, creating an illusion of three dimensions. And don't worry – not every mosaic needs to be dead flat; mixing tiles of different thickness creates texture and beauty, and light will bounce off the uneven surfaces.





style secret 6

Look to the floor for a colour hit

Colour isn't limited to the walls and ceiling; the floor can also benefit from a brightly hued update. If you're stuck with a compact space, large-scale square or rectangular floor tiles in cool colours (white, icy blue, light grey or any pale shades) will instantly add a surge of spaciousness to a small or narrow room, as there are fewer grout lines for the eye to follow. If you're tired of tiles and yearn for a serious shock of colour, an epoxy resin finish (left) is an ultra-modern approach to bathroom flooring. "Smooth and glossy, resin is water-resistant, warm under foot and has no grout lines to distract from the colour of the floor, meaning maximum impact," says interior designer Penny del Castillo.

tip Got a large room to work with? Create a border effect on the floor with brightly coloured ceramic tiles in contrasting hues, such as cherry red and pale cream. These texture-rich tiles equal toe-tickling heaven for tired feet.

PHOTOGRAPHY (TOP) CATH MUSCAT (BOTTOM) W. WALDRON/INSIDE/GAP INTERIORS

style secret 7

Don't underestimate the power of paint

Take your love affair with colour into a new realm by adding an audacious splash of colour to your bathtub. This elegant claw-foot bath (right) is the last place you'd expect to see golden-hued yellow in all its glory, but the simple addition of colour brings this traditional fitting into the now. Glossy shades of the bath surround are further emphasised by similarly coloured accessories and beauty products. Epoxy enamel paint will do the job nicely but it must be applied by a professional who knows how to prime cast iron or steel surfaces and re-enamel bathtubs – visit www.duluxaccredited.com.au or call Dulux on 132 525 to find an accredited painter.

tip If you're feeling especially crafty, apply a lick of paint to revitalise old tiles. Simply ensure that your existing tiles are clean, dried and primed (try White Knight Laminate Primer, \$32.47/litre) before using a water-based spray-on tile paint, such as Plasti-kote (\$19.95/310g, plasti-kote.com.au) or White Knight Tile Paint (\$34.79/litre, whiteknightpaints.com.au). Be sure to apply two coats for best results. It's perfect for revitalising discoloured and dated floor or shower tiles. 

