the 6-step *colour scheme*

If you're about to create a colour scheme and don't know where to begin, here's a six-step process to get you started.

1. You need to love it

There's no point painting your interiors in vintage pastels if no-one in your family likes pink, lemon and pale blue. The best colours are chosen with the owner's personality in mind. A nature lover may prefer greens and blues to bright reds, while an out-going owner may prefer bold colours.

You may already know what colours you like. Even so, use this book, magazines and websites to inspire you. Don't over-think it, just collect or tag what appeals. Then, when you have a decent-sized collection, look for common elements. It might be that your choices are all light, casual and beachy, or all moody and masculine.

Visit your local Resene ColorShop or reseller and pick out colours that you're instinctively drawn to. Together with your collected images, you'll soon see a pattern emerge.

If you thrive on change, you might choose a neutral colour scheme so that you can regularly choose new accessories like cushions and rugs without affecting the entire scheme.

2. Style and setting

A big driver of interior style and colours is the style of the house. An old character home will inspire a different look to a modern box, or a mid-century suburban home, or a timber-clad retreat in the bush.

It's the same with the setting. If there's a dominant feature nearby like the sea, bush, rolling farmland or city skyline, you might use colours inspired by those aspects. If you want to highlight the view, choose a lighter colour palette. If you want to distance the view make your interior colour scheme more contrasting.

Which leads on to the next point. Nature conditions us to expect balance and harmony, and offers good guidelines to using colour. In nature, darker colours are often underfoot, like the earth, while mid-range colours are at eye level, like trees and leaves. The lightest colour is above us, like the sky and clouds. This can translate to interiors by using darker carpet, tiles or timber flooring then mid-range colour on the walls and pale colours on the ceiling.

3. Use a starting point

Using a favourite painting, wallpaper, curtain fabric or a recently purchased cushion as the starting point for a scheme is a great way to create good colour composition. You can already see that the colours work together so draw them out of the art/wallpaper/fabric

top tip

Resene
Wild Thing

Once you have narrowed down your colour choices, use Resene testpots to confirm your colour scheme. Apply two coats onto a piece of A2 card, leaving a border around it so the colour isn't influenced by anything else. When the paint is dry, pin your colour to the wall and view it in daylight and artificial light, moving it around different areas of the room and folding it into the corner of the room for a true feel of the finished effect.

and use them on the walls and trims. Note the proportions the colours are used in, and mimic that in your colour scheme.

4. The right mood

Select colours that reflect the mood you are trying to create. If you want a calm atmosphere, use greens, blues and earthy neutrals, and steer clear of high-energy reds. Conversely, if you want a stimulating interior, go for reds and oranges.

Most people find neutral or more pastel colours easy to use – colours that have quite a bit of white in them. So instead of grass green, you would have soft apple. Instead of brown, it would be beige. The common element, white, means that you can successfully combine any pastels into a colour scheme.
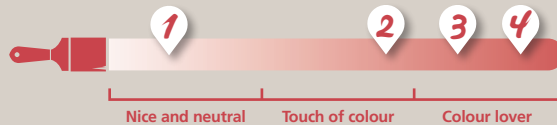
5. The right balance

Successful colour schemes have one thing in common – balance. Try to use no more than two to three principal colours with touches of other accent colours to lift the scheme. The basic rule of using two-thirds of one colour and one-third of another is often successful.

Consider starting with a simple scheme of two colours and an accent, then introduce other colours as you gain confidence. Use more intense hues in areas that are occupied for short periods, such as formal dining rooms, hallways, bathrooms and entrances.

6. Choose your sheen level

Varying the gloss level of your paint also helps the colour scheme look more interesting. Most opt for Resene Zylone Sheen or the more washable Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen on walls, Resene Ceiling Paint or the more washable Resene SpaceCote Flat on ceilings and Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss or glossier Resene Enamacryl gloss on trim and joinery.

The lower the sheen level the moodier and earthier the colour will look. A higher gloss will make the colour seem cleaner and brighter.

Nice and neutral – for those who want calm surroundings.
Touch of colour – adding some colour without going overboard.
Colour lover – showing that bold schemes needn't be scary.

1	Nice and neutral
2	Touch of colour
3	Colour lover