

THE HOME YOU OWN

## 7 gray paint colors that are anything but sad and dull

Designers share gray paint colors to help you create a serene and stylish space.



A bedroom is painted in Pavilion Gray by Farrow & Ball. (Christopher Stark)

By Kathryn O'Shea-Evans

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If gray paint seems about as exciting to you as watching gray paint dry, you're not alone.

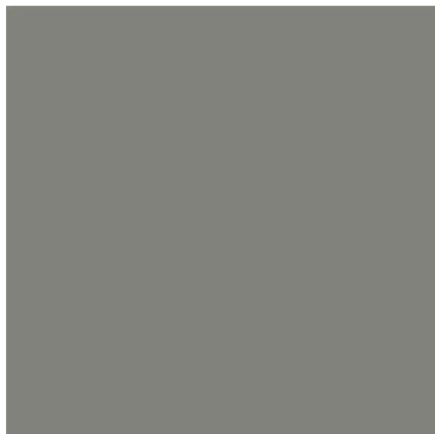
“Gray has just been *everywhere* the last five or six years, so it does have the tendency to make things look dated now,” says Kristin Harrison, founder of [Bungalow 10 Interiors](#) in McLean, Va. Indeed, the color's popularity appears to be waning, especially with Gen Zers, who frequently eviscerate “[millennial gray](#)” on TikTok.

The ubiquitous neutral does still have its place, though, and its fans. It's an even-tempered choice in open living plan spaces and in bathrooms, where a sense of tranquility can be especially coveted. And many people embrace it for its sophistication factor as a backdrop for more richly colored art and antiques.

But it has to be the right gray. For those of us who still want to invoke the serenity of beach pebbles or timeless icy glamour of silver, Harrison has some hard-won advice that can help: Look for something with good undertones, whether they're violet or green. Cold and off-putting grays tend to happen when "people are picking grays that are maybe a little bit too *gray*, if that makes sense," she says.

The ideal gray is one where people "don't actually know what color it is when they're looking at it," Harrison says. "I think that's a way that probably keeps it a little bit more current and not look so dated."

## Chelsea Gray by Benjamin Moore



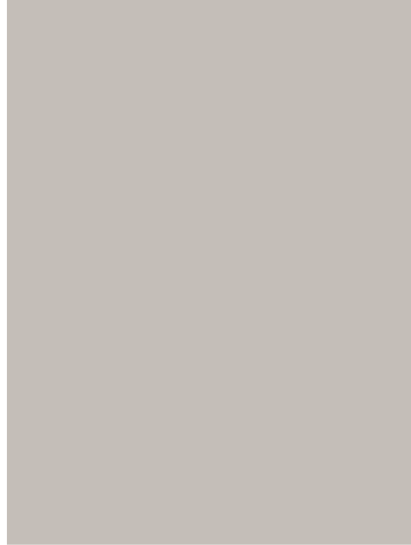
Benjamin Moore's Chelsea Gray. (Benjamin Moore)



Chelsea Gray on kitchen cabinets. (Angela Newton Roy Photography)

Harrison likes the undertones in Chelsea Gray by Benjamin Moore, which she calls a chameleon. "I used that on a kitchen renovation where the wife loved gray tones, but the husband wanted something a little more masculine, a little bit stronger," she says. "Chelsea Gray was really a kind of a nice blend. It's a grayish taupey with some violet undertones, but it really shows a lot darker than a normal gray. And when the sun hits it, I knew it would kind of give both of them what they were looking for."

## Pavilion Gray by Farrow & Ball



Farrow & Ball's Pavilion Gray. (Farrow & Ball)



Bedroom walls with Pavilion Gray. (Christopher Stark)

The right gray “doesn’t have to be sad or generic,” Los Angeles designer [Jeff Andrews](#) said in an email. He likes the subtle notes of blue in [Farrow & Ball’s Pavilion Gray](#). Getting gray right is all about finding a shade with balance, Andrews says. “Neutral can go in so many directions, but for me, it’s about how the color reflects, absorbs and accentuates natural light in a room. I love when a paint color surprises

## Kendall Charcoal by Benjamin Moore



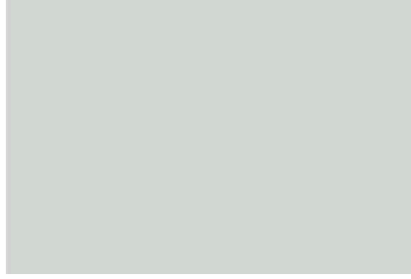
Benjamin Moore's Kendall Charcoal. (Benjamin Moore)



Kendall Charcoal in a dining room. (Stacy Zarin Goldberg)

[Susan Sutter](#), a designer in Arlington, Va., chose a darker shade, [Benjamin Moore’s Kendall Charcoal](#) — “a nice saturated gray” — in an eggshell finish for a client’s dining room. “It works really well in contemporary spaces.” Sutter says. She added: “If you don’t want to go too dark, too moody, pairing it with a light white wainscoting can really create a nice look. And then if you want to go more ‘full mood,’ then you can paint all of the walls in it.”

## Wickham Gray by Benjamin Moore



Benjamin Moore's Wickham Gray. (Benjamin Moore)



A living room using Wickham Gray. (John Cole)

“There are thousands and *thousands* of grays,” says Sydney Levy, an interior designer with [Anthony Wilder Design/Build](#) in Cabin John, Md. Because there are seemingly endless options, Levy advises you “make sure you pick a gray that can read warm.” She recently used [Benjamin Moore's Wickham Gray](#), a soft shade that resembles the shadows in cumulus clouds, for an airy living space.

## Silver Polish by Behr



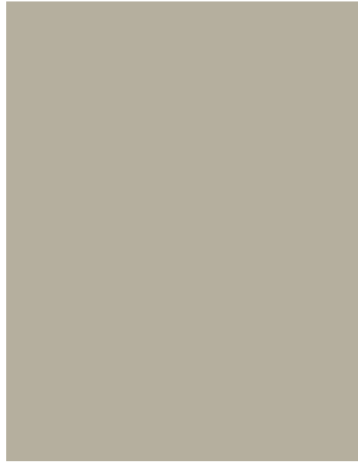
Behr's Silver Polish. (Behr)



A laundry room with Silver Polish. (Phillip Nguyen)

“One of my favorite paint colors is [Behr Silver Polish](#),” wrote Linda Hayslett of [L.H. Designs](#) in Los Angeles, in an email. Here, it brings a sense of visual order to a laundry room. “It’s a subtle gray tone that creates a clean, fresh backdrop. ... It’s neutral but with just the right amount of warmth to keep the room from feeling too sterile,” she says.

## Hardwick White by Farrow & Ball



Farrow & Ball's Hardwick White. (Farrow & Ball)



A mudroom using Hardwick White. (Kip Dawkins)

Designer Sara Swabb, of D.C.'s [Storie Collective](#), used [Farrow & Ball's Hardwick White](#) in this mudroom sheathed in beadboard for a classic look. "This is truly a beautiful, complex shade that might seem like a simple gray at first glance, but its subtle warmth and depth make it a timeless choice," Swabb said in an email. The color has a lot of black in it, which lends a grounded, earthy quality, she says. "Its versatility means it pairs beautifully with a wide range of other colors and materials, making it an ideal backdrop for a variety of design styles — from traditional to contemporary." Los Angeles designer Jennifer Miller also has used the mid-tone shade, including in her own home.

## Lamp Room Gray by Farrow & Ball



Farrow & Ball's Lamp Room Gray. (Farrow & Ball)



Lamp Room Gray. (Lindsay Brown)

There's a contemplative, almost poetic feeling to [Farrow & Ball's Lamp Room Gray](#), a shade inspired by the staining left behind on white walls after trimming lamp wicks. Austin-based designer [Annie Downing](#) likes to use it as an accent color. "When paired with other tones, it enhances and complements the space without overwhelming it," she says.

*Kathryn O'Shea-Evans is a design and travel writer in Colorado.*