

5 Steps to Choosing Exterior Paint Colours You'll Enjoy

By [DirectHome Editorial](#)

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8 min read

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Choose exterior paint colours by testing the proposed paint on the house, not only on a colour card. Daylight, texture and the neighbouring roof, window frames and paving can change how a colour appears. These five steps take you from choosing a palette to confirming exactly what will be painted before the full job begins.

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For a [facade and exterior renovation](#), test the chosen colours on a sample area before painting the whole exterior. It gives the household a real surface to judge and the contractor a clear reference for the chosen result. The aim is to resolve a decision while changing it is still manageable.

1. Build the palette around the materials that will stay

A wall colour belongs to a palette

The same illustrated wall tone, beside different retained finishes



Dark roof and trim



Terracotta roof, pale trim

Review the real sample beside the finishes that will stay

Illustrated palette comparison • not a calibrated paint preview or a completed project

Both illustrated walls use the same colour. The roof and trim change around them. This explains context; it is not a calibrated paint preview or a photograph of a project.

Start with the roof tiles, window frames, gates, visible stone, timber and paving that are not being replaced. These elements already set much of the facade's colour relationship. A wall colour that looks calm on its own may feel very different beside a strong red roof or a dark metal frame.

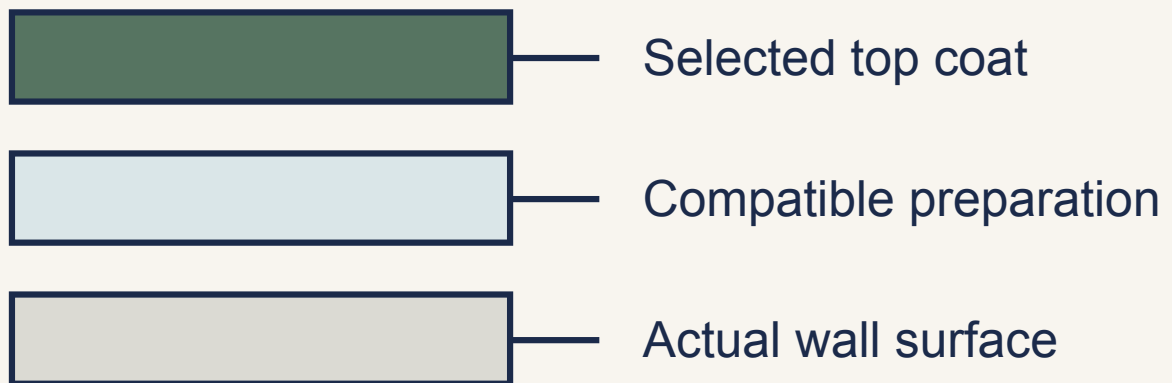
Photograph the whole elevation as a working reference, then look at the actual materials outside. The photograph helps you keep track of the combinations; the real surfaces show the variation and texture that an image can lose. Include the entrance recess and side walls if they are visible from the approach, rather than treating the facade as one flat rectangle.

Decide which elements should lead. You might want the wall to sit quietly behind timber screens, or you might want the entrance to be more distinct from the main elevation. This is a design choice; an accent colour is optional. If several retained materials are already prominent, adding more separate colours can make the composition harder to settle.

Use that relationship to make a short shortlist. Comparing a few candidates against the fixed finishes is more productive than covering the wall with a large field of unrelated shades. Each extra sample changes the surroundings of the others, and the original decision can become harder to see.

If the property is conserved, establish the permitted colour and work before arranging the painting. Facade painting falls under Category 3 conservation works and requires prior planning permission. The appointed team should confirm the route for your house.

2. Settle the product and finish before judging the colour



The selected coating needs preparation suited to the actual wall surface.

A colour name is only part of the proposal. The actual coating product, sheen and surface texture contribute to what you will see. A sample made with a convenient substitute cannot fully demonstrate the finish that the contractor intends to apply across the house.

Confirm that the proposed system is suitable for the surfaces in the scope. An exterior masonry wall, metal trim and timber feature are not automatically coated with the same product simply because they share a colour. The contractor should specify the compatible preparation and system for each material rather than stretching one paint description across the entire elevation.

For an exterior masonry system, the sample should reproduce the specified substrate preparation and coating sequence. Confirm those requirements for the actual product. A colour sample cannot settle whether an existing wall defect needs repair before painting.

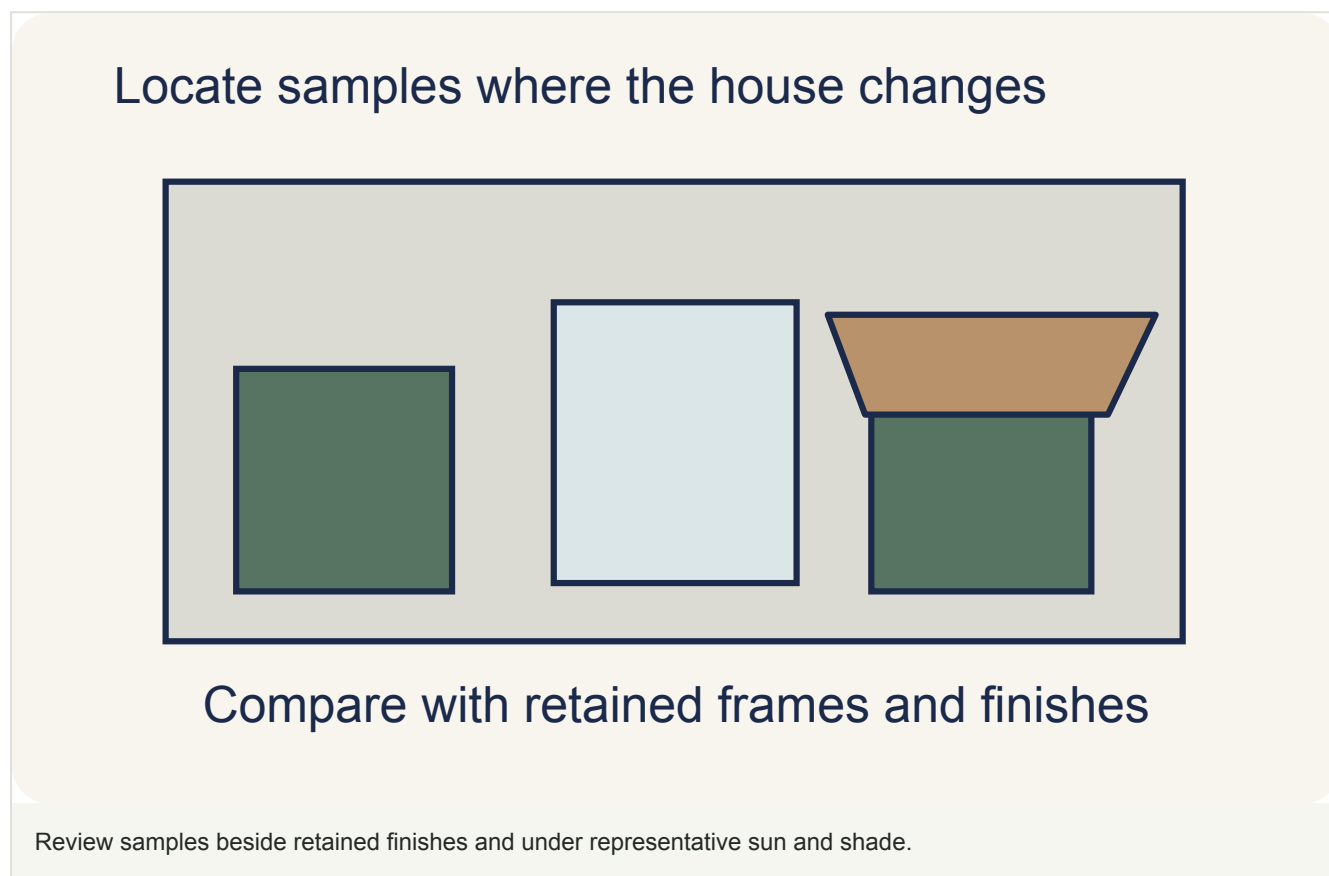
Texture deserves attention during the sample stage. A newly repaired patch can be smoother than the older wall around it. Light across that difference may remain noticeable even when the paint colour is the same. Decide whether the preparation and sample area represent the finished wall you are actually buying.

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3. Put the sample where you can compare it with the house



Agree the sample location and method with the contractor. The panel needs enough area to read as a surface, with a useful relationship to a retained frame, roof edge or other relevant finish. There is no universal panel size that resolves every facade; the right arrangement depends on the viewing distance and the detail being judged.

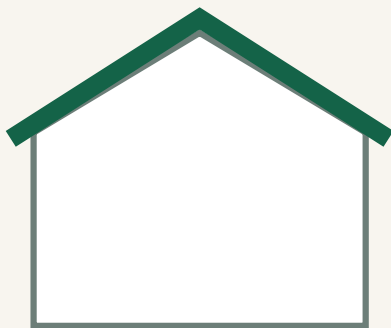
Where the elevation has very different conditions, one sample location may not answer every question. A wall in direct sun and a deeply shaded entrance can make the same finish read differently. The team can propose representative areas or suitable prepared sample boards, explaining what each demonstrates and where a board may differ from the actual wall texture.

Let the sample reach the appropriate review condition for the selected product. A freshly applied patch is part of a drying process, not necessarily the final appearance. The contractor should identify when the panel is ready to judge and ensure that the preparation and application represent the proposed system.

A digital visualisation remains useful for comparing the overall placement of colours. It helps show whether the main wall, columns and entrance have been assigned coherently. Use it to narrow the palette, then test the shortlisted colours on a physical sample at the house. Screen colours are a guide to the decision.

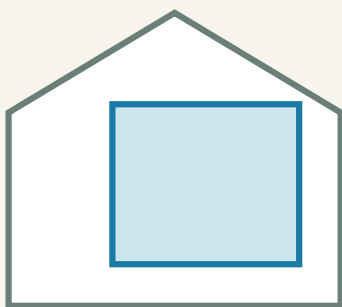
4. Review the panel as you use the house

Judge the panel from two distances



Usual approach

See it with the complete roof and elevation.



At the entrance

Compare texture, trim and nearby material.

Usual approach: See it with the complete roof and elevation. At the entrance: Compare texture, trim and nearby material. Schematic only; no dimensions or site-specific approval are implied.

Begin with the view from the road or the usual approach. That distance shows how the wall belongs to the roof and the whole elevation. Then move to the entrance and look beside the window or trim. A subtle difference that is almost invisible across the street may become the dominant impression when

you stand at the front door.

See the panel in the lighting conditions the facade actually receives. Morning, afternoon and shaded conditions can reveal different relationships with the surrounding materials. You do not need to manufacture every possible weather condition, but one quick look in convenient light leaves a major part of the decision untested.

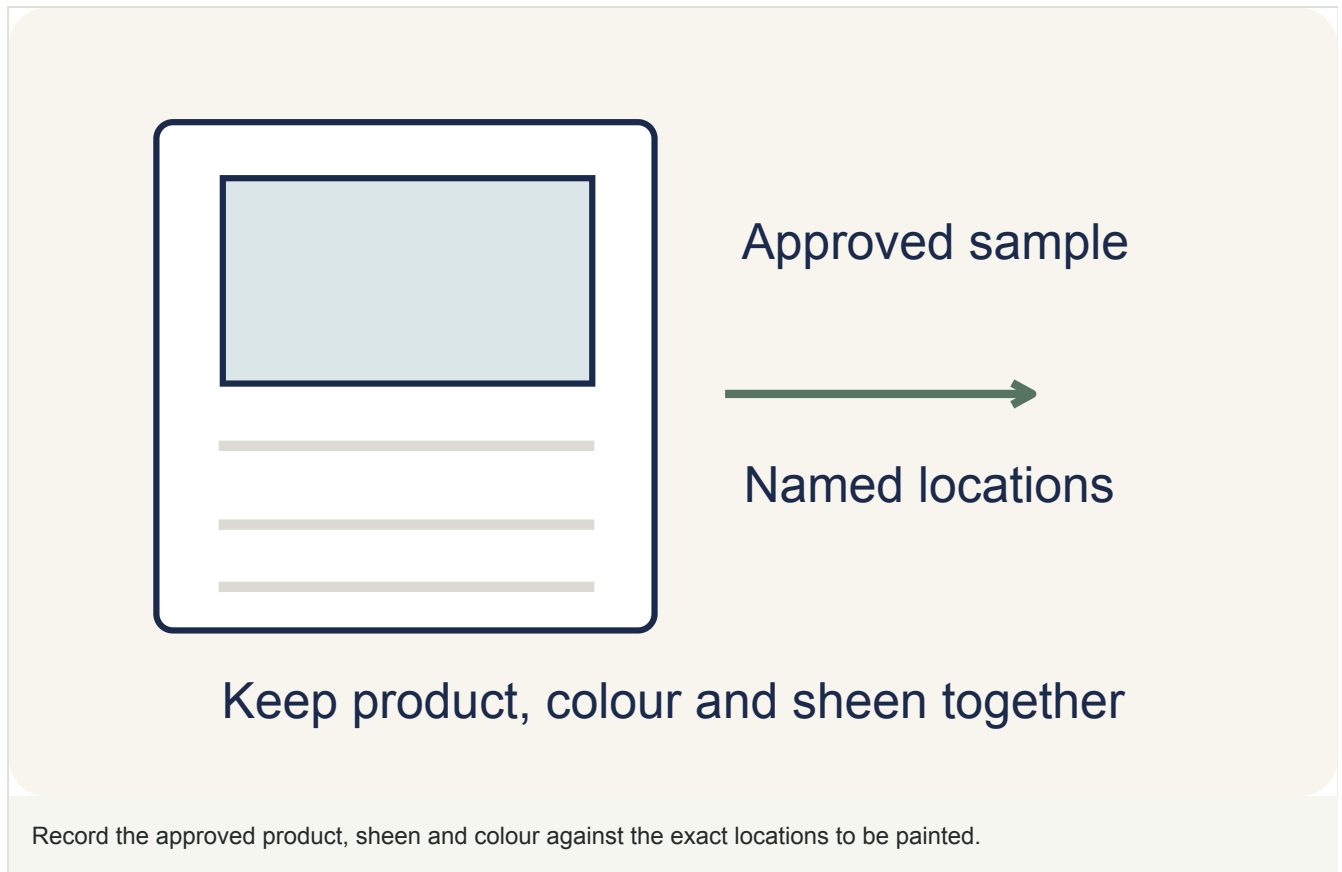
If exterior lights contribute to the entrance at night, include that view when it matters to the design. Judge it under the lighting that will remain or the proposed lighting arrangement the team can meaningfully demonstrate. A temporary work light should not become the reference for the finished entrance.

Keep the decision focused. Ask whether the wall sits well with the fixed materials, whether the contrast at the trim is intentional and whether the texture and sheen feel right at the relevant distance. These are more useful questions than trying to assign a universal description such as warm, modern or bright to the sample in isolation.

Photographs can record the review, but avoid deciding a close colour choice by comparing images from different phones or lighting conditions. The physical panel is the shared reference. Invite the household members who need to agree to see that reference before the contractor proceeds with the full area.

Resolve signs of water ingress before treating the work as a colour change. [A damp exterior wall needs a diagnosis before new paint →](#)

5. Agree exactly what will be painted



Once the panel is accepted, record the actual product, colour reference, sheen, surface preparation and locations where it will be used. Identify the sample that was approved and retain an agreed reference for the job. That is especially helpful where similar shades are assigned to the main wall and trim.

Keep a clear reference for the agreed paint finish

- ☐ The actual product, colour reference and sheen are recorded.
- ☐ The sample represents the agreed preparation and relevant wall texture.
- ☐ The main wall, trim and feature areas are assigned clearly.
- ☐ The retained sample or other agreed reference is identified.
- ☐ Any required permission for the property and works is in place.

Use this blank checklist to record your project review.

If the proposed product or finish changes later, revisit the relevant approval rather than assuming the same colour label will produce the same result. The contractor should explain any practical difference in the replacement system and whether another sample is needed. The point is to preserve an agreed appearance, not to make ordinary coordination unnecessarily formal.

The [facade and exterior buying guide](#) covers the wider scope around access, surface condition and contractor selection. For colour, a good sample stage ends with one settled palette and an understandable finish specification. You should be able to point to the panel and say which parts of the house will receive that result.

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