

# EASY WAYS TO ADD COLOR

Craving some color in your life but not ready for a major commitment? Fear not: There are dozens of clever, cheerful ways to infuse your rooms with hue, no roller or drop cloth needed. Here are 20 simple places to start.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
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## 1 gather a colorful collection

You'll never go wrong with a good gallery wall or well-placed "shelfie," but to add more *oomph* to the equation, try channeling your inner magpie by building a collection around a single color. It's a technique that can be used dramatically—say, by filling an entire shelf with blue antique toy cars—or more subtly. "You can have artwork that's mostly black and white and introduce a thread of color that runs through," says Connecticut designer Libby Cameron. "Maybe use a red mat or red frame on one, and on another there is a thin red line in the image. That unifies everything without being slavish to a theme." **Scott Living Ceramic Cut Lantern**, \$45, [kohls.com](http://kohls.com)







## 2 choose a cheeky toaster

For renters (or anyone who just isn't up for a big project), colorful appliances or well-placed accessories can be a stylish, low-commitment way to introduce a vibrant thread to an otherwise neutral kitchen. On the spendier end of the spectrum are companies like BlueStar, which offers pro-style ranges and refrigerators in over 1,000 custom colors. But there are plenty of ways—maybe a buttercup toaster from Smeg?—to get big results without breaking the bank. “Store a red Le Creuset pot on the stove or a blue KitchenAid mixer on the counter,” says Oakland, California-based designer Kelly Finley. “We do it all the time.” **Retro-style 4-slice toaster, \$250, smeg.com**



## sow an indoor garden

“It’s no coincidence that you see greenery in every picture when you flip through magazines,” explains New York City designer Kathleen Walsh. “Plants are a prop stylist’s number one secret weapon to add color to a room.” Don’t have a green thumb or the budget for a regular delivery of cut flowers? Don’t fret! Even if all you can keep alive is a spider plant or some indestructible succulents, put them in an eye-catching planter. In his new book, *Wild Creations*, Baltimore-based social media star and “plant stylist” Hilton Carter suggests a mix of simple terra-cotta pots along with quirkier vessels like antique glass bottles or brightly colored vintage beer or coffee cans. Think of it as recycling chic! **Kaya 2-Piece Ceramic Bowl Planter, \$58, jungalow.com**



## 3

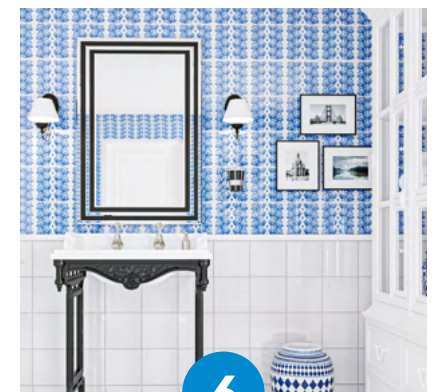
### make a blanket statement

White sheets never go out of style, but admit it: They can be a bit of a snooze. Investing in a small wardrobe of eye-catching duvet covers—a soothing French blue linen, a sunny yellow stripe, something festive for the holidays—to pop over a plain comforter is the surest way to give your bedroom an instant lift based on your mood or the season. **Limoncello Gingham Duvet, \$285, societyofwanderers.com**



## 5 spiff up a snapshot

Want big-impact art without the big price tag? Forget about fancy galleries, advises Finley, and scope out your camera roll instead. These days, even the most basic phone cameras shoot high-quality files suitable for enlarging to 8 by 10 inches or larger—perfect as a statement piece or as part of a larger gallery wall. “Lots of the art in my house comes from my travels, and it’s not all family snapshots,” Finley says. “The key is to do a good edit, zooming in on a punchy abstract shot or a colorful detail that reminds you of where you’ve been.”



## 6

### try high-impact tile

If you’re ready to move on from your white kitchen, a colorful tile backsplash can be a simple way to infuse the space with personality, advises British stylist Geraldine James in her new book, *A Pop of Color*. Cheery mosaic tiles come in sheets and are relatively easy to install (no DIY skills required) as well as inexpensive. But if you’re only covering a small space, it can also be fun to splash out on something unique or handmade, like jewel-toned Moroccan zellige or modern, made-to-order delft tiles.

BLANKET: COURTESY OF THE BRAND; BATHROOM: COURTESY OF COUNTRY FLOORS. BOTTOM LEFT: GETTY IMAGES.



## 7 show your stuff

Can it really be so simple? Yes, it can. Just put up a hook and hang something pretty on it. “I’ve always been a fan of using beautiful pieces of clothing as art, especially vintage items,” says James. Whether it’s a rope of brightly beaded necklaces, a collection of fluttering scarves, or a silky kimono to slip into after a bath, put things you love to look at out where you can see and use them; don’t hide them away!



### frame some fabric

For a can't-miss way to add layers of color and softness to your space, take a page from the history books, says Cameron: “People have been hanging decorative tapestries on their walls for centuries. And these days, whether you pick them up on a trip or browsing Etsy, it’s easy to find scraps of beautiful textiles.” Of course, for a real bargain, nothing beats shopping your closet. “Do you have a special piece that’s been handed down through generations, like a cherished handkerchief or a silk scarf in a fun pattern that could be framed?” asks Chicago-based designer Amy Kartheiser. “Art can be anything you connect with.”



## 8 dress up your towel bar

Good bath towels are determined by their plushness, size, and absorbency; in other words, their value is primarily a matter of function, not form. But that doesn't mean they have to be *serious*. If you're itching to give your bathroom a color wash, there's an array of options to tempt you, from natural dyed waffle-weave Turkish towels to preppy stripes, vibrant oversized spa sheets with patterns inspired Native American blankets, and more. **Striped Turkish Lightweight Towel**, \$39, [markandgraham.com](http://markandgraham.com)

TOWELS AND STAIR RUNNER: COURTESY OF THE BRANDS.

## 11 dabble in wallpaper

If wallpapering an entire dining room or bedroom feels like too much of a commitment, consider installing a punchy pattern (a graphic geometric print or a bright botanical) somewhere smaller and more unexpected, like the back of a bookshelf, a walk-in closet, or a pantry. And remember, it's OK to have a little fun, says Cameron. Case in point: the laundry room she recently lined in a cheeky Pierre Frey paper covered in trompe l'oeil stacks of folded linens. Going for a subtler effect? Los Angeles designer Melissa Warner Rothblum's advice: Just look up. “Wallpapering the ceiling in a simple white room is always a sweet surprise,” she says. **Dot Comb Peel and Stick Wallpaper**, from \$40, [chasingpaper.com](http://chasingpaper.com)

## 10 decorate the stairs

“They cut down on noise, slow wear and tear, and add such color and warmth to a space, even if they’re simple,” says Cameron, whose own home features a bold leopard-print runner—ideal for (in her words) “hiding a multitude of sins.” When it comes to selecting your own, she recommends avoiding thick pile or shaggy weaves that can trip you up and won’t wear as well. “To my mind, there’s nothing better than a classic, cherry red stair runner,” she adds. “But whether you choose a solid color or a pattern is a matter of personal taste.” **Rhapsody Wool Woven Rug**, \$128, [annieselke.com](http://annieselke.com)







## 12 have fun with a faucet



A shiny new faucet will always give your kitchen a lift, and adding color to the equation is an even *more* surefire way to create a bang. A magenta or marigold tap in a kitchen or bath feels fresh and contemporary, but it's no mere flash-in-the-pan trend. Pioneering Danish modern designer Arne Jacobsen created the iconic original in 1968, and you can still get it in one of 15 colors. For something less museum-quality (and, consequently, spendy), this Grohe hose model is sweet and strong. **Essence Pre-Rinse Spray Kitchen Faucet**, from \$592, [build.com](http://build.com)

## 13

### go bold on your windows

Scarlett O'Hara and Maria von Trapp had one thing right: Nothing will transform a space like a stylish set of window treatments. "Curtains are one of the first things you see when you walk into a room, so they truly set the tone," says Walsh. "Play with pattern and color and you can add immediate drama." There's a fine line between fun and frippery, so if you're keen on a bold hue or eccentric print, stick to simple drapes with minimal pleats (and no swags!). "The key is striking that balance between just enough and too much," she says.

FAUCETS AND CHAIR: COURTESY OF THE BRANDS.



## 14

### layer some rugs

Don't get hung up on play-it-safe rug rules. When it comes to carpets, says Walsh, more is more: "Because your eye doesn't take in the pattern the way it does with something hanging on a wall, and since it will be naturally broken up by furniture on top of it, you can always take more color in a carpet than you might think." One of her favorite tricks is layering a boldly patterned Oriental or chunky tribal rug over a larger solid wool or sisal base to help define conversation areas in big rooms or open-concept spaces.



## 15 ditch the neutral dinnerware

Push out of your white-plate rut and get adventurous with colorful dishes and linens. "Tablecloths and napkins are one of the easiest things in a house to play with; they can set a mood, reflect the season, and just be so fun," says Walsh. "But sometimes people need some hand-holding to get out of their comfort zone." If you'd prefer to test-drive before you commit to a look, a growing number of online start-ups like Social Studies and Freshly Set will let you "borrow" from a chic lineup of designer dishware, flatware, and linens (think Rent the Runway for your dining table) and send them right back. **Splatter Plates**, \$15, [crowcanyonhome.com](http://crowcanyonhome.com)



## 16 toss in some temporary color

"I don't do white rooms," says Finley. "Even when someone wants to stay neutral, I try to add at least one signature element that's bright." If colorful pieces (a throw pillow, a lamp, a statement chair) are removable, even color-skittish folks feel safe. **Pari Rattan Chair**, \$128, [anthropologie.com](http://anthropologie.com)





## 17 create a statement bed

Hanging a daring piece of art above the mattress creates a dramatic focal point in a bedroom. But it can be tricky to make a large piece fit, especially if you have a headboard to work around. One solution? Adorn the headboard itself with a boldly patterned fabric or a scenic tapestry to create a visually arresting statement piece that's both practical and pretty. "Lately I've been collecting vintage African textiles to collage over beds," says Houston-based designer Mary Patton. "It adds color and visual interest without breaking the bank."

## 18

### get a (new) handle on things

That Ikea dresser you've been lugging around since college still has some life left in it—but does it have any soul? Before you relegate it to the curb, try giving it a face-lift with some cheerful new handles. A set of glass knobs in amethyst, aqua, and amber costs less than a large pizza, and on Etsy you can find hand-painted pulls in every color of the rainbow. "They're such a fast, easy improvement," says Finley, "especially in a kid's room or in a builder-grade house where there's not a lot of customizing." *UniqueHardwareSupply Leather Pulls, from \$6 each, etsy.com*



## 19 stack some pretty books

Books: They're for more than just reading! "I've been known to buy piles of books at the flea market just because I like the spines," laughs Finley. "Stacking them on a coffee table or arranging them on shelves according to color can be such an easy way to refresh a space." But don't feel you *have* to organize by color. "Embrace the kaleidoscopic color mixing that takes place on a wall filled with well-read and well-loved page-turners," says Walsh.



## 20 throw some shade

"A new lighting fixture is a fabulous way to insert a punch of color, especially in bathrooms or kitchens, where there's not as much opportunity to play around with fabric," says Rothblum. Even the same old lamp can bring fresh energy with a new shade in a daring print or color. "If you're unsure of what will work, bring your lamp shopping with you and try out a few options," advises Walsh. "For patterned and brightly colored shades, it helps to test things out with the light on and off to see how that changes the look. And don't be afraid to go a little bolder than you might expect!" *OKA Warna Silk Pleated and Pattani Eclipse Lampshades, \$95 each; Grenadilla Table Lamp, \$195; oka.com*



PROP STYLING BY SOPHIE STRANGIO. BEDROOM: PHOTOGRAPH BY MOLLY CULVER. HOOKS: COURTESY OF THE BRAND.