

TECH SHEET: WHAT'S IN A COLOR MATCH?



Not all color matches are created equal because color can be rather unpredictable when you take into account the various factors that can affect its appearance. These factors include individual differences in human vision from person-to-person; the type of light reaching the surface, from natural, incandescent, to fluorescent light; and the surrounding colors that are reflected from a surface such as flooring, window treatments, furniture and fabrics. It's important for your clients to select the right color, so they are completely satisfied with the results. Many companies make claims such as "custom" color matches, but you need to dig a little deeper to understand exactly what it is you're paying for.

How do companies match colors?

There are two commonly used approaches when it comes to color matching. One practice involves a device called a spectrophotometer and the other requires the added skill of a professional who can "custom" match colors.

- A spectrophotometer is a sophisticated device that reads a given color, breaks it down into the various components of light that make up the color, and then provides a tinting formula that can be used to make the tinted gallon of paint.
- A color matching technician has excellent color vision and tremendous experience mixing colorants to reproduce colors. Although color matchers are quite skilled, they still use a spectrophotometer to get a starting point for a color match. Then, they make small adjustments to improve the appearance of the color.

So which approach is best?

Every paint supplier says they provide custom color match services, but what are they really offering? One method, typically referred to as a "read & shoot" match, provides a good or acceptable match by simply reading a color with a spectrophotometer and tinting a gallon of paint with the provided formula. Does this provide an adequate color match? Sure, but is it the best possible color match? We don't think so. Experience shows that the added step of custom matching is better. The human eye is capable of seeing over 2.5MM colors, which is still vastly superior to the capability of electronic devices. A skilled technician can take the initial tint formula provided by a spectrophotometer and make slight adjustments to improve how a color looks, based on surface textures or sheen differences, for the best possible results. Keep in mind, while the custom matching method takes more time, you can rest assured that your resulting color more closely matches your vision and your client's desire.

Why color match at all?

Be sure to ask your paint supplier what type of color matching services they offer. If you need the highest quality color match possible, and they can only offer "read & shoot" matching services, you need better service from a company that provides "custom match" services. Dunn-Edwards offers custom match services and our color matching technicians are well trained in selecting the best tinting formula offered by the spectrophotometer based on where the paint is to be applied. And, we equip and maintain our operations with the latest technology that allows for better repeatability, less metamerism, and more objective color matching.



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Use caution if you see marketing claims that provide “exact” color match services. “Exact” color matches are impossible to obtain. But if you think in terms of finding just the right color that works together with all the other factors that influence color, you will achieve the best result. When color matching, the most successful approach is to make the final color selection and test a small 4’x4’ sample of color on the wall. Look at the sample during the day and at night to ensure the different lighting does not affect the appearance. Once your client lives with it and sees how the color looks, they will feel more confident about their choice and you can finish the job.



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