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## How to Pair Wood Tones in Your Home Like a Designer

These expert tips will help you mix furniture, floors, and more like a pro.

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Luke White

Most designers agree that matching all the wood tones or furniture in a space isn't necessary—and can even feel uninspired or unintentionally **make your house look cheap**. And while the idea of mixing and matching wood tones may seem overwhelming, it's actually an opportunity to **create a home full of character and charm**. By thoughtfully combining woods with different colors, as well as pieces from different periods of time and varying **provenance**, you can add depth, contrast, and sophistication to your space.

While there's no strict rulebook for mixing wood tones, following a few straightforward guidelines from designers can ensure your choices feel intentional. These **expert-approved tips** will take the guesswork out of the process and empower you to pair wood tones like a pro.



## Begin with Your Dominant Wood Tone



The foundation of a beautifully layered room starts with establishing your dominant wood tone. This will typically be through your more permanent items in a room like flooring, cabinetry, or your largest wood furniture piece. Pay attention to its undertones: Warm woods feature yellow, red, and orange hues, while cool woods tend to have gray or green tones.

Matching undertones across your selections ensures a seamless look. If you're not sure of your wood's undertone, designer Kate Aslangul, founder and creative director of **Oakley Moore Studios**, notes that walnut is a versatile choice, as its neutral hue allows it to harmonize easily with both cool- and warm-toned woods.

Bethany Adams, of **Bethany Adams Interiors**, offers a nuanced take, emphasizing that it's important to consider the context. "It really depends on the overall look of a home," she explains. "In a more modern space, where furnishings and materials are tonal and minimal, I do think you should stick to all warm or all cool because the palettes of these spaces need to be really tight to work."



However, in more eclectic interiors, Adams embraces contrast: “I am totally fine with mixing warm and cool tones. If you consider all the different fabrics, materials like stone, tile, or plaster in a space like this, you are going to find enough of any one tone to recommend warm or cool wood.”

Adams illustrates this point with a favorite example: “If the home has dark mahogany moldings but an oak floor, I’ll refinish the floor in a lighter color—sometimes even veering towards gray to cut the red out of a red oak—to give the room some lightness and lift.” The result? A fresh contrast that highlights architectural features while preserving historic charm.

### Strike a Balance with Contrast



Annie Schlechter for VERANDA

Mixing different wood tones is about creating a dynamic yet balanced look. Designers agree that using the light-medium-dark formula, where tones contrast but maintain shared undertones, ensures visual interest.

“I always recommend anchoring your palette with a consistent undertone—either warm or cool—across all wood finishes,” Aslangul says. “This subtle thread of continuity allows for variation in depth and shade without sacrificing harmony. Think of it as layering: Darker and lighter woods with the same undertone can be artfully combined to create a space that feels both intentional and visually rich.”

Aslangul advises that you repeat each tone at least twice “to reinforce rhythm and balance throughout the design.” For example, pairing a walnut coffee table with picture frames in the same tone can help add subtle symmetry and flow.



## Play with Finishes



Thomas Loof for VERANDA

Incorporating varied finishes such as matte, wire-brushed, or oiled wood can add nuance and natural beauty to a space. “I tend to avoid highly varnished finishes. When wood is sealed to the point of gloss, it risks losing the very qualities that make it so compelling: its natural tactility, organic warmth, and quiet authenticity,” says Aslangul. Subtle differences in texture also highlight craftsmanship, allowing its raw elegance to come through.

Adams emphasizes the importance of contrasts, both with wood tones and finishes. “If you're starting from scratch with your home, I'd advise following the same guidelines—dark wood furniture on a dark wood floor will get lost. If you want either one to stand out, you'll need contrast. The same can be true of finishes. I abhor a shiny wood floor, but a polished piece of wood furniture can be a thing of beauty. Mix it up so nothing feels too overdone.”

When pairing wood tones with paint, Adams suggests cooler colors like blue, lavender, or green for darker woods and **neutral paint** for lighter-toned woods. These thoughtful contrasts, whether in finish or pairing with paint, can ensure your space feels intentionally curated and visually balanced.



## Layer with Other Design Elements



Michael Mundy for VERANDA

Wood tones interact with more than just each other. They can influence—and are influenced by—their surrounding design elements, so carefully consider your color palette, fabrics, and materials.

“A well-placed contrast—such as a cool-toned rug beneath warm timber furniture—can sharpen the visual language and help bridge disparate undertones,” says Aslangul. “It’s about creating a dialogue between materials so that nothing feels accidental, and every element supports the final vision.”