



“You need to go back to the paint store, Jim,” Anne says. “Look at it. It’s hideous.” “You can’t even see it,” says Jim. “The wall’s white. What do you want?” “I want it to be the *same* white,” says Anne. “I *can* see it. Right there.” She points to a roller’s width of paint on the living room wall. It almost blends in with the rest. “The Hunters are coming over for dinner tomorrow. You know that if our walls aren’t all the same shade of white that I’m gonna hear about it from Stephanie, and then from the rest of the neighborhood when I take the kids to swim practice next week. I swear she doesn’t have anything better to do.” Jim scowls. He crosses his arms across his chest. “Maybe I’ll paint that Stephanie white,” he says. “Maybe you’ll go back to the paint store,” says Anne. “Any why don’t you take a chip of paint with you so you get it right this time.”



Not all white is right. Image Credit: Flickr User Eren ([CC BY 2.0](#))

### **Inaccurate Printed Color Swatches are Replaced with Spectrophotometers**

Color matching has long been a standard offering of paint retailers. In the old days, it involved thousands of different printed color swatches homeowners or contractors could visually pair with the sample they wanted to match to. They'd bring in a paint chip from their wall, a cut-out from a magazine, or maybe something weird like a bird's feather. Then they'd compare their sample to the printed swatches and pick the closest match. Your technician would then run out to the stock room or mix up a new can, and they'd be on their way.

This method resulted in a lot of complaints of poor color matches, which meant unhappy customers. Printed swatches aren't the same color as liquid paint in a can or solid paint on a wall. The fluorescent lighting of your store isn't the same as the incandescent or LED lighting of a home's interior and certainly isn't the same as daylight through a window or on an exterior surface. Matching under these conditions will yield results that are fairly close to the desired color, and if people aren't picky, that's probably close enough. However, some people want exact matches, and as the human eye can distinguish between millions of discrete colors<sup>1</sup>, they've got a lot to pick from. So paint retailers found a better way.

Spectrophotometers: your store almost certainly already has one<sup>2</sup>. When a customer brings in the color swatch that they want their walls to look like, your technician zaps it with the

spectrophotometer, which quantizes the color measurement into exact color coordinates. These numbers are fed directly into your automated mixer and produce the exact shade that the customer desires. It's simpler, quicker, and more accurate than the old system.



Don't worry, if you can't find your color here, there's plenty more swatches to look at in the back.  
Image Credit: Flickr User Clean Wal-Mart ([CC BY 2.0](#))

### **Difficulties in Color Matching Solved with Proper Equipment and Training**

All of this being said, there are some factors that need to be taken into account. Color perception is affected by changes in gloss can cause variations in color measurements. The same color can be formulated in Flat, Eggshell or Gloss, and you might want a few gallons of each. This issue is not insurmountable. Choosing an instrument that can account for variations in texture is possible with the help of the experts at Hunterlab. With the proper machine and expert training at the store level—which can then be taught to junior technicians responsible for day-to-day operations—a store can demonstrably improve its color matching abilities. For this application, we recommend using a [LabScanXE](#). It measures the appearance of the paint as the eye sees it and is available from industry leader HunterLab.

### **Accurate Color Matching Generates Long-Term Returns**

As a store manager, you're naturally concerned with value. As color matching is a free service offered by paint retailers, you may be wondering how these improvements in service translate into enough increased store revenue to offset the cost of replacements or upgrades.

It's about customer satisfaction. Homeowners and contractors have many options for their home improvement needs. Both standalone paint stores and paint divisions in larger retailers are engaged in zero-sum competition within their geographic areas for the same customers. Once a customer finds a solution that meets their needs, they are likely to return to that same store for their next transaction. As a result, retailers that can deliver color matching solutions the first time, every time, will create and retain customers for life. The long-term value of repeat business will generate returns that far outweigh the upfront cost of improving your color matching equipment. To learn more about which instruments will be most effective for your store, or to consult an expert with questions on proper techniques, [contact the professionals at HunterLab](#).

1. "Number of Colors Distinguishable By The Human Eye,"  
2006, <http://hypertextbook.com/facts/2006/JenniferLeong.shtml>
2. "Color Matching: Does it Really Work?,"  
2009, <http://www.housebeautiful.com/shopping/home-gadgets/a225/technophobia-color-matching/>