

Pass with Flying Colors

Hallways don't have to play second fiddle to more popular areas of your home. Jazz them up with paint, light, and creativity, and you'll make the path through the hall less of a prelude and more of a main event.

Get sneaky by using paint-induced illusions: Vertical stripes (*below*) make the hallway look taller than it really is. Light colors open up a hallway; dark colors accentuate narrowness. For balance, coordinate the paint colors with those seen through door openings from the hall (*right*).



candy striping Give your hall walls a coat of many colors. This stripe pattern is simple to do and easy on the eyes. Before getting too color-happy, coat the wall with latex paint the same color as the trim. Let that coat dry for two days. Then, use a level and a pencil to make light vertical lines on the wall every 20 inches. To get a mini-stripe between each larger one, adhere a strip of 2-inch-wide, low-mask painter's tape along each line's left side. Remember to mask ceiling and floor trim to prevent getting color where it's not wanted. Paint stripes in alternating colors, and remove the tape when you're done. As a finishing touch, add wall sconces to emphasize luminescence.

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Hallway spaces make natural galleries, so go with the flow by using a pale, neutral color as a backdrop. Paint the walls a muted shade, and use semigloss paint in the same color on doors, moldings, and frames to continue the seamless-looking canvas (*left*). Get even more artsy by using cable lighting you can direct at the works of art (*below*). In addition to helping the art out, the light will guide passersby through the hallway.

that's my gallery From fresco to finger paint, any medium is welcome in your personal hallway gallery. But be selective: Choose a few pieces that are the same size, and space them so there is a "pause" between each frame. Use the same type of frame for all of the pieces in your collection, and keep it simple to avoid visual clutter. Make small pictures showroom-worthy with frameless mats in giant sizes and bright colors. Here, we used 24x36-inch frameless poster kits (available in arts and crafts supply stores). If you'd rather not cut the mats yourself, ask a framing store to do it for you.



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Go toward the light when it comes to wainscoting. Light-colored paint takes well to plywood wainscoting, especially paint shades such as khaki, olive green, wheat, or white. Choose two shades, using the lighter color above the wainscoting and the darker below. For the lattice strips, pick a shade lighter than the other two colors (*left*). Paint the wainscot, then nail it up after it's dry. Remember to touch up the nail heads. Instead of a plain light fixture, go with a more decorative hanging paper shade (*below*).

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practical magic Wainscoting leads a double life as both a decorating tool and a safeguard against the elements. Keep hallway wainscoting low: A 35-inch height will widen the hall visually. This wainscot, made from 1-inch-thick plywood cut to fit and nailed to the wall, can stand up to hard knocks from big suitcases and big tricycles. It also keeps sound out and hides walls that are in bad shape, even if they're uneven or crumbling. To get this look, nail 1/8-inch lattice strips over plywood wainscot every 12 inches. Prime and paint the strips the same color as the floor moldings. Top the wainscot edge with a 1-inch-wide rail. 🏠

