

The Painting Game

PREPARATION

When you are ready to paint take the time to do it right. Like everything else in life, the hardest part is the prep work.

Start by emptying the room as best you can. Give yourself room to move a ladder around easily, have space for your paint cans, tray and the like. Removing switch plates, outlet covers (drop them all into a zipbag), drapery hardware, and anything else that will slow you down and keep you from doing a professional job is advised.

Go around the room with a small container/amount of ready-mixed drywall compound or something easier to work with like DAP's DryDex. This is a great product because it dries fast – goes on pink and dries white so you know when you're good to go. It's great for filling miter seams in doors and baseboards: using a small spatula you can scrape away the excess and then with a barely damp cloth or paper towel, gently wipe the seam smooth. No sanding required. Whichever product you choose, start looking for holes and divots, and fill them.

This is also the time to address nail pops. If you see even the smallest outline, it would behoove you to hammer them back in with a counter sink and fill the hole. If ceiling divots seemingly disappear on you, try searching in the evening; once spotted, circle the imperfection with a pencil – not pen.

When your filler is dry, take a sanding block and fine-grit paper or go for those foam sanding blocks and systematically pass it

over the walls, paying extra attention to any bumps, fluff, or those dreaded paint-brush bristles that were never picked off by the previous owner. This is not a strenuous job nor does it take long but it will improve the look of your walls tremendously by knocking off bits that will otherwise just get bigger as more paint is applied.



Once those jobs are done, take some time to clean up your mess. Tackle the floor first then the walls. A damp cloth rinsed regularly should do the job.

Whilst painter's tape is not great (though some brands are better than others) tacked on lightly, it is good for guarding your baseboards and door frames from your roller and also for pulling wall-to-wall carpet away from baseboards.

During both prep and paint work you may need to wipe something quickly, and your finger – unlike a cloth - is always at hand (pun intended). Having some comfortable painting clothes to then wipe your fingers on is a good idea.

CHOOSING COLOUR

Inspiration for paint can come from a variety of different sources though usually it's a colour from something already in the room such as a sofa or draperies. There are plenty of websites from paint companies and decorating magazines offering the latest trends and how to pull a room together. Collect paint samples from all the different



places that sell paints. Most of them will end up in the recycling bin for being too this or not enough that. Eventually, though, you'll get it narrowed down to one or two. Tack them up onto the wall and check them during day and evening light and, if possible, during both sunny and cloudy days.

If you're still unsure how to choose a colour, often the best place to go for assistance is to a paint and decorating store - the ones that offer whole-home decorating options. These places have experienced staff that knows their colours and what works together. Their advice and knowledge are worth your custom. Take along samples of the main fabrics in the room to help the process.

PAINT

If you do not know what type of paint is on your walls, the easiest thing to do is to prime them with Benjamin Moore's Fresh Start. It's simply the best. This primer can go over any paint, and will allow you to use latex. Oil can go over latex but latex cannot go over oil (it will peel).

All paints are not created equal. Often the bargain-priced paints prove more expensive as you may need to add more coats and they tend to wash off easily. If cost is a concern, wait for the good stuff to go on sale. Pittsburgh Paints' Manor Hall is an excellent choice. Benjamin Moore paints are likely easier to find and offers good quality paint. The quality of latex and/or acrylic paints is so good now there's little reason to choose oil paint.

To estimate the square-footage of the walls, multiply the perimeter of the room by the height of the walls, deducting for large windows and closet openings. For ceilings, multiply the length by the width. The average 3.7L can of paint will cover approximately 400 square feet (37m²). Purchase all you need before starting to avoid mismatching colors or running out before the job is over.



A dollar-store plastic mini photo album allows you to keep a record of your paint colour chips for all rooms, custom tint formulas, and snippets of room fabrics for shopping purposes.

PAINTING

If you are working with new drywall, you'll definitely want to prime it first as skipping this step will be obvious because the compound and drywall absorb paint differently. Primer paint (it is not necessary to use Fresh Start on unpainted surfaces) dries very quickly and often by the time you have finished priming the last wall in a room the first wall is ready for paint.

Invest in a good angled sash brush, not too thick or wide - 1.5" is easiest to use and handle. Cheap brushes will not give you the same results because they are more difficult to use and often drop their bristles. Choosing quality rollers and roller covers is equally important; talk to the experts or search online to determine your choice.

We've always found it easiest to paint the ceiling first, then windows and baseboards before walls. Here's a guideline for painting the wall where it meets the ceiling: with a steady hand (and your 1.5" sash brush) dip a small amount, say 1/2 - 3/4", of paint onto the brush; remove the paint from the "ceiling side of the brush" by running it along the paint can rim; with the "wall-side" of the brush, you should be able to paint a steady line along the top of the wall. Get close enough to the ceiling so you aren't stretching and proceed slowly and confidently. Once the line is done you can apply more paint to the brush to cut-in a couple of inches/centimeters. And invest in an angle-cut artist's brush for touch ups at the end of the job.

If you are planning on doing the whole room in one day you may want to do all the cutting in at once. However, if you do it say, the day before or longer ahead, you run the risk of the paint drying to a different shade leaving your corners looking darker.

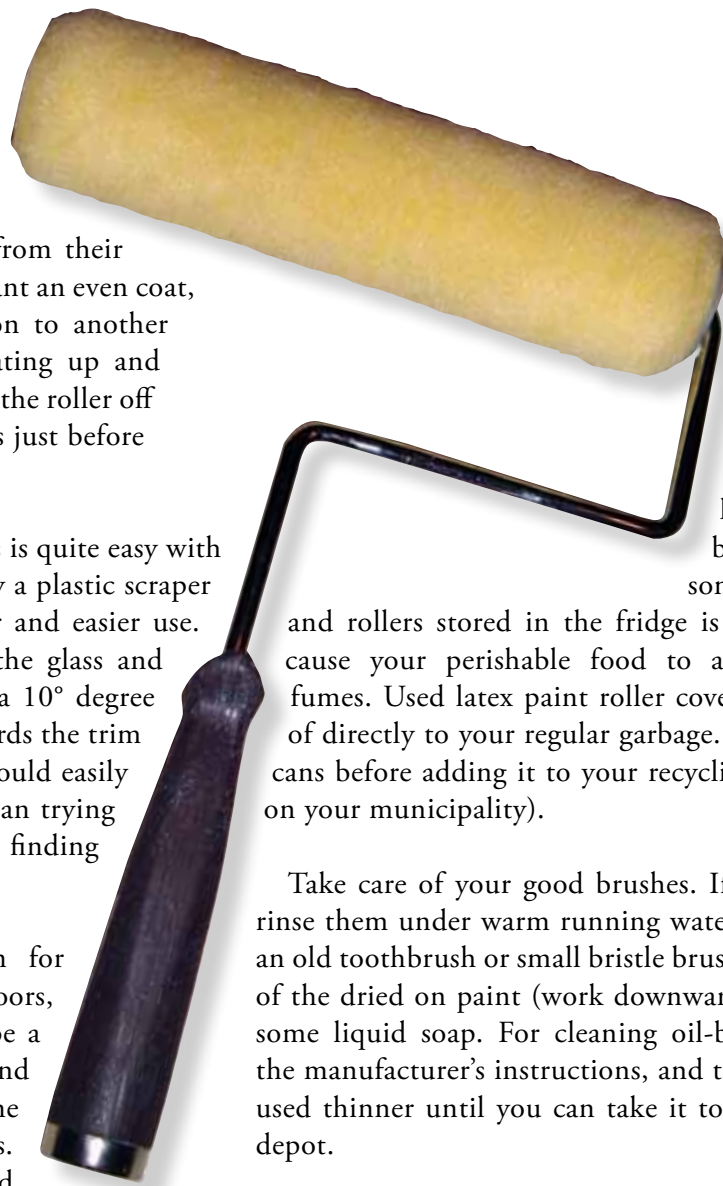
Most people try to get too much from their paint. Don't roll your roller dry. You want an even coat, not thick and thin. Before moving on to another section do a final gentle pass alternating up and down the section you've just done. Lift the roller off at each end. The best time to do this is just before you reload paint.

Removing paint from window panes is quite easy with a single-sided razor blade (you can buy a plastic scraper which will "hold" the blade for faster and easier use. Gently score the paint along where the glass and frame meet; with the blade at about a 10° degree angle and working from the glass towards the trim and then down or across, the paint should easily peel off. This step is so much faster than trying to tape around all your windows and finding the paint seeped under just the same.

Painting doors is also a concern for some. If you have flat hollow-core doors, use a roller. Steel doors will usually be a combination of some brush work (around windows) and roller and we've found the sponge rollers work best for steel doors. If you have panelled solid-core wood doors or pressed wood-like doors, use a brush. Use the same techniques you would for wood, that is, paint with the grain. Try painting the recessed/raised parts first, then the panel, finish with the horizontal and vertical frame. Do not try to paint both sides of the door at once and do remove the door from the frame and then remove all hinges. Find a horizontal place to lay the door or purchase a couple of workhorses. You will benefit from being able to access the "bottom" side to wipe the paint that will inevitably wind up there.

CLEAN UP

If you are using latex, wash your brushes and trays at the end of each day. (Having never used oil-based paint, web-surfing says for your brushes follow as suggested here for rollers.) If you haven't finished the room before quitting time, load your roller with paint (as if you were going to paint on the wall), and simply place it into the bottom



of a plastic bag. Start rolling the roller around the bag till it's quite tight and just leave it in the room – keep the handle outside the bag. Contrary to some advice, brushes

and rollers stored in the fridge is not safe as it will cause your perishable food to absorb the volatile fumes. Used latex paint roller covers can be disposed of directly to your regular garbage. Air-dry your paint cans before adding it to your recycling bin (depending on your municipality).

Take care of your good brushes. If using latex paint, rinse them under warm running water - it helps to have an old toothbrush or small bristle brush to comb off some of the dried on paint (work downwards) then start with some liquid soap. For cleaning oil-based paint, follow the manufacturer's instructions, and then safely store the used thinner until you can take it to a hazardous waste depot.

If possible, keep a little paint for any touch-ups down the road. Saving some glass jars with tight-fitting lids for this purpose is a good idea. If you can remove the label from the can great, otherwise, transfer the information onto a piece of paper and tape it to the jar. To keep the paint in better condition, take a plastic bag or cling film and carefully stuff it into the jar to displace the air which will deteriorate your paint over time.

HIRING A PAINTER

Painting your home can be a satisfying and economical project for the average DIY homeowner. However, should you wish to hire a professional painter, here are some things to keep in mind:

As with any contractor you need to take precautions to ensure you're hiring the right person. Interview at least three companies before making your decision. You need

to be able to compare what you're hearing to ensure all contractors are in line with each other: apples to apples. You'll want to ask how long they've been in business, if they do the work themselves, are they bonded and insured. Ask for local references and call them all. If the references are close enough ask if you can visit. Ask them if they would hire the painter again. Ask if anything went wrong and, if yes, how was it corrected?

We often ignore our intuition when it comes to hiring contractors, but shouldn't. How professional is this person? Did they arrive on time? Are they ready to start immediately or is there a wait time. A busier painter is a contractor in demand. It's best to wait for the one you want than hire one you've got reservations about because he/she can start earlier.

You'll want a contract. It should have the company name and phone number. You want all the tasks you expect done to be listed on the contract. If you expect holes in the walls to be filled ensure it's on the contract. Assume nothing. If the quality of primer and paint is important to you ask them which paint they use. If you want a different brand let the painter know you will supply the paint and ensure that is on the contract, too. You want the start date, end date, how much the job will cost, when payment(s) will be made and what warranties are in place all listed on the contract. Yes, you want to trust this person but always remember: it's your house and your money. Protect both.

It's been our experience that the times people get into trouble is when they trust a referral from a co-worker or neighbour's relative or friend without applying due diligence. Unfortunately, it's often this referral that ends up being the contractor who should never be hired. Unless you've interviewed them as scrupulously as the next prospective contractor and talked to their referrals – beyond the person offering the name – we recommend you simply say you'd rather not complicate the friendship and continue your search.



Your safest places to search for a painter is, as mentioned, the local paint and design shops: they want your ongoing business and referrals. If searching the Internet for independent contractors, zero in on the ones that advertise quality and bypass the ones that advertise economy.

Information on painting exterior siding is part of our spring edition newsletter. If you require it before that time, please contact us and we will happily email it to you.

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