

Smart Words for Smart Homeowners

THE EXPERIENCE OF EXPERTS AND THEIR ADVICE ON RELEVANT HOMEOWNER TOPICS

Smart Interior Painting

There is no dispute, the right color in a room can restyle everything. That's the power of a proper coating of the right color and sheen of paint; it restates and enhances room reality. Color is as important as lighting to give a room the feel that you want.

In the "paint job", the application of paint is a bit less consequential than the preparation of the room. Prep work tells the quality story. Interior painting is not hard work but you will be tired after 7 or 8 continuous hours...or in some cases three full days.

A crudely executed preparation and paint job is easy to spot, with its drips, shadows under the color, spattered floors, evident nail pops, incomplete covering, slips-ups and uneven lines. More often than not, haste or lack of discipline are the culprits. But with some thorough preparation, many of the snags can be eliminated. With some planning the painting tasks will be much easier. So before you crack your first paint can, schedule a full day for the prep work.

1) Clear Or Cover Furniture, Lamps & Floors

To begin the process you must make room to work. Clear the room of obstacles and breakables before starting the prep work. Remove wall art, curtains and furniture to another room or away from the walls. You need at least 4 1/2 feet from the walls to all objects for their protection and yours. Remove doors that open into the room.

Invest in quality drop cloths. Drape thick painters canvas tarps over the furniture that can't be relocated. Wall-to-wall tarp the entire floor. Tape (blue painters tape) around any other items that can't be removed.

The current style trend is to remove switch plates and socket plates and not paint over them, but that may not be your preference. When removing these plates, put the screws back into the fixtures for safe keeping. Put the cover plates in a drawer in another room.

2) Do The Prep Work On Walls & Ceiling First

When the room is clear and you are ready, go to the next step. There's no wizardry to ensuring great results. It takes work, lots of discipline and an eye for detail.

You must prep the space first and organize the entire job so no steps are repeated or done out of order. You don't want to make painting this room a career.

Depending on the number and severity of the anomalies and the size of the room, the prep work can take longer than painting the room.

You must find and fix the following items now: nail-pops, wall paper removal, stress cracks over doors and entryways, poor spackle jobs under the last paint job, dust in the corners, dust and dirt under the last paint job, open seams at window trim, door trim and heater covers, etc. Make all these go away and your finished job will look better and it will show quality craftsmanship for a long time.

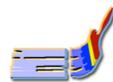


3) Find The Imperfections

Shine a bright light at a shallow angle close to the walls and ceiling to see all the disguised imperfections. Their shadows will be evident. An old lamp with a bare bulb held close to a wall will make minor cracks, bumps or nail pops and their shadows jump out. Find, fix all pops, cracks, dust marks and dents.

4) Sand All Surfaces

You'll be sanding the spackle repairs later but now you should sand the walls and ceiling with a long handle sander and 60 - 80 grit sand paper. This will show you the high spots, bad spackle areas, protruding nail heads and most of the embedded dirt that was painted over. We want smooth walls and ceilings as our palate. Now that you know where they are you can fix them.



Tip: Make sure you wear a proper dust mask when sanding.

Using a pole sander, sand the walls. Sweep the sander side to side as you work your way from the top to the bottom. That will remove and reduce the painted-on dirt and dust from the previous painter.

When sanding apply moderate pressure. Take care that the sanders metal head

doesn't flop and cut or gouge the wall. Remove lumps, ridges, bulges or drips on painted walls and ceilings.

Sand the tops of window sills, the door trim, and any flat area that has taken a beating. Sand flat woodwork and door faces that will be painted. Notice areas that will need to be primed or repaired before painting.



Tip: Sand the ceiling completely before the walls.

Damaged wood or trim requires a slightly different approach. Please don't use spackle to repair wood because it just doesn't stick. For damaged or split wood trim use painter's putty or a two-part wood filler or a vinyl caulk like Phenoseal. If the split in the trim is too large replace it.

5) Repair Nail Pops

Now it's time to understand and begin the repair, spackle and tape work on the room.

There are a few reasons nail pops exist. The nails are pulling out the frame or studs and away from the stud and the wallboard they were nailed through. The heads of the nails have "popped" above the wallboard and are visible. Originally these nails may have been the wrong length or wrong type or may have become rusted due to the use of "wet" lumber during the construction phase. We find that rooms above and below where the teen band plays are especially prone to vibration induced nail pops.

Missing or loose wallboard nails and nail pops can cause the wallboard to vibrate. If left un-repaired the next nail in line will loosen, then it will also move out and so on down the line. Eventually the corner and seam tapes will separate from the wallboard and damage will become very evident.

6) Repairing Nail Pops Is A Multi Step Process

- ✓ Removing the popped nail, inserting a sheet rock screw in the place of the nail,

- ✓ Inserting new screws into the stud about five inches above and below the nail pop. These will share the load. This ensures that the wallboard is tight against its studs. Dimple the screw head areas.
- ✓ Spackle over the screw holes and head dimple indents.
- ✓ Let the spackle cure (dry), then sand the area flat, re-float (spackle again), dry, sand it flat and smooth, and spot prime the area.

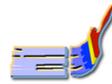
This is not hard work but it is time consuming.

7) Fix Open Gaps And Seams

You'll find open gaps and seams where the window and door trim meet the wallboard, where air vents meet the wallboard, and where baseboard radiators butt against the wallboard. Most stress seams, split tape seams and waves in the tape can be seen over the corners of doorways, in intersections of rooms and at the joints of two sections of sheet rock. Identify all these locations because they must be repaired.

Be sure to remove all dust before caulking. We use a vinyl adhesive caulk rather than latex caulk because latex will get brittle and crack and eventually fall out. Vinyl has better adhesion qualities also and it simply looks better for a very long time. Wet your finger and smooth the caulk with even pressure to push it into the crack and leave a crisp edge.

Filling gaps cuts also down on drafts and makes your trim look new.



Tip: Use Phenoseal brand vinyl caulk for great results and let it cure at least 2 to 3 hours before painting over it.

8) Fix Open Paper Tape Seams

If you can see where sections of wallboard are joined or where the paper tape was applied to the joints, you must repair these areas. Cut away loose or flapping paper tape or deviations and get down to the stable, flat, dry underlying sheetrock. This might mean using a razor knife to cut away sections of the loose or protruding tape. Don't replace it with paper tape of any kind. Use sticky-back, fiber tape made especially for sheetrock. After removing the old tape, cover the cleaned open seams, corners, and joints that you want to repair with fiber tape. After you have completed this step, dust each area and proceed to the spackling step.

9) Spackling The Repairs

Apply a ready-mixed all-purpose joint compound over the taped areas. Buy joint compound by the bucket.

The key to a well-crafted spackle job is blending the repair with the adjacent clean, flat surface. Because spackle takes time to cure, dry and shrink, this is often done in two or three layers over a period of hours or days. Follow the spackling and sanding steps for wallboard seams and nail-pops.

10) How To Spackle

Hold two taping knives, one in each hand. Dip the front blade of a clean taping knife into spackling/wallboard compound bucket. Load under 1/3rd of the blade. Spread the compound perpendicularly across the tape joint, into the fibers, covering the fibers and a few inches on each side of the tape with a shallow layer. Then, holding the larger knife at a steep angle to the wall, draw the blade along the joint in the other direction along the tape seam. This second knife should travel along the wall in the same direction as the tape, scraping compound off the flat wall and pressing compound evenly into the taped void. Let this layer of wallboard compound cure for at around 6 hours or until perfectly dry. It will shrink as it dries. Then sand it flat to the surrounding wall with 60 - 80 grit sand paper and a flat sanding block.



Tip: Thin coats of spackle are better than thick coats.

Apply a second coat encouraging flat layers. Let this layer cure. Sand these two layers before applying a third coat. Never sand down into the wallboard surface paper or into the fiber tape.



Tip: By using increasingly wider knives for each layer the repaired joint will seem smoother and flatter. When the last layer is dry, remove minor imperfections by wetting the compound with a sponge and sanding along the joints with sandpaper block. Always wear a mask when sanding.

When you are satisfied with the flatness, smoothness and uniformity of all the repaired places, prime them all with a good primer or interior undercoater. You

can tint the primer to the same color as the wall to make the next part of the job easier.

11) Clean The Kitchen

If you're painting a kitchen an extra step should be followed. Remove dust, dirt, and grease spots with hot water, a little mild dishwashing detergent or TSP, and a large utility sponge. Rinse walls with warm clean water to remove the soap residue. Let it dry before applying spackle or paint.

12) Clean All Surfaces

Using a shop vacuum and then a damp rag, clear all the dust from the corners, walls and trim before you start to paint.



Tip: For the best control when using caulk, cut a very small angled opening in the tube's tip.

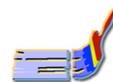
13) Paint The Ceiling First

Ceilings usually get painted first. The first task is to cut-in the ceiling. Fill your paint bucket so the level of paint comes less than halfway up the bristles of the 3 1/2" angled brush. This is a trick painters use to get consistent paint quickly onto the brush without looking.

Don't be afraid of getting paint on the adjoining areas of the walls. Wipe the drips as soon as you see them with the damp rag in your back pocket. You'll be painting walls later.

Start cutting-in in one corner and coat the ceiling holding the brush to get right into the corner. Cutting in is actually pushing paint into the corner angle and moving the brush along the straightest line but never passed the line. So sneak up on it. Many painters overpaint the wall if the wall color will be light in color. As soon as the entire ceiling is cut-in you are ready to roll.

Cut-In about 1/2 the width of the roller size you'll be using. You'll be over lapping that width. On large rooms use the widest roller that you can handle. We use an 18" wide roller.



Tip: Never brush what you can roll.

14) Use A Roller Next

Fill the roller tray to a depth that doesn't rise above the pile of the roller. Place the roller in the paint then distribute the paint evenly by bringing the roller back and forth over the distribution section of the tray.

Begin on one corner. Get as close to the wall as you can. Roll in smooth parallel actions. If you work in two square yard sections it will be easier to keep the wet edges fresh. Coat the entire ceiling. Once you have finished the first coat, allow to dry thoroughly and then repeat the process, including cutting-in for the second ceiling coat.

We keep a fan blowing on the ceiling to hasten the drying process as soon as the ceiling is coated.

15) Cut-In Walls Around Top Edges

When the second ceiling coat is dry it's time to cut-in the walls where wall meets the ceiling. Use the same rule of thumb; cut-in half the width of the roller size you'll be using.

To cut in, run a line of paint along the wall about an inch away from the edge. Then turn the brush onto the bristle tips, and press down slightly so the longest bristles gather into a point. Use this point to draw a careful line of paint right up to the edge where wall meets trim. Once you have a clean line in place, level out any heavy areas or drips, then move on. In order to keep a wet edge, don't work in too large an area at one time.



Tip: Never load the brush directly from the can. Use a clean bucket instead, or you risk contaminating your primary paint supply with dust or dried flecks.

16) Roll The Walls

Now that the cutting in is finished it's time to begin the roller work. Load the roller. Roll a W or M shape on the wall to spread the major part of the paint without lifting the roller. Then spread paint evenly between the lines. Keep painting the wall in this manner until it is covered. Overlap a bit of the cut-in edges to blend away any visible brush marks. Don't spend time making the first coat look perfect but do not get sloppy either.

If a second coat is necessary, wait until the first coat is dry to the touch, then repeat. Paint will dry faster if

you keep a low running fan pointed toward the ceiling in the room. You don't want lots of wind because that will raise any dust in the room. Fan it just enough to move the surface moisture in the paint.



Tip: When the roller makes a peeling sound on the wall, its too dry and should be reloaded.

17) Paint The Trim

When the walls are completely dry, tape where the trim meets the wall. Paint the moldings and the door and window frames with a two-inch angled brush.

A professional painter may spend two to four days on an average-size room. That's how long it takes to correctly prep, prime and paint...period. The biggest secret is to just take your time.



Tip: When painting with glossier finishes, sand lightly with a fine sanding sponge between coats to help the final coat take hold.

18) Use Masking Tape? Well, Maybe.

Using painters tape can be a ticklish challenge for a number of good reasons.

- ✓ Very often paint can bleed behind the tape, or peel the paint layer that it's attached to. This anomaly are hard to correct.
- ✓ Most latex paints form a skin and removing painted tape can tear the skin, creating a ragged line. This anomaly are hard to correct.
- ✓ Lastly, taping takes time.

I'd like to recommend that you learn to cut-in the edges. But, if you can't cut in, you can't beat tape but you must use a good quality blue painters tape. It has the right adhesive and bleeds less. Before you pull it off, make sure it's dry and score the tape edge with a sharp knife. This trick will help prevent ragged lines.

19) Brush Loading Tips

Load it right. Ideally, you want as much paint on the brush as you can control without making drips or blobs. To do this, dip the brush about 1 1/2 inches into the paint, then tap each side of the brush against the side of the can...do not scrape or wipe the paint

off. Tapping knocks off some dribbles and also presses the paint inside the bristles. Keep the brush moving so it doesn't drip.

Painting trim or window sashes requires less paint on the brush exterior so you should dip, tap and scrape. You'll find that you have more straight line control for skinny surfaces.

20) Work Top Down

After painting the ceiling, work from the top down: Start with the crown molding, then do the walls and then paint the casement molding around the windows and doors. Paint the base trim last.

21) Do Doors Right

Painters recommend laying the door on sawhorses and work horizontally. If this is not possible you should start from the inside and work toward the edges. On a paneled face doors paint will puddle in the corners so tip-off the corners when you tip-off the flat areas. Tipping g-off is pulling the brush over the rolled surface to level out the finish.

When painting the stiles (vertical) and rails (horizontal) just follow the grain of the wood. When the grain changes abruptly, for instance, where the rail meets the stile, don't stop your brush stroke you'll only leave a lump of paint. Apply paint across the joint with a full stroke, and then tip off the overlapping section by pulling the brush in the direction of the grain. Let the door is dry before painting the back side or rehanging it.



22) Skip Daily Brush & Roller Cleaning

Don't bother cleaning brushes and rollers if they are going to be used the next day on the same job. Latex paint dries slowly in cold temperatures so wrap brushes and rollers in air tight plastic and store overnight in a refrigerator area. Don't try painting with a cold roller the next day...let it come to room temperature first.

23) When To Prime

It's a common myth that walls that have been painted many times don't need to be primed. In fact, primer helps maximize the sheen and coverage of finish paint and gives the finish coat a deeper and more uniform appearance.



Using a prime coat is an absolute necessity when there are many repairs to a wall or ceiling or when the new color is very far from the old color. The best primer is cheaper than the best finish paint. A good primer is easier to apply than the finish coat. A good primer dries faster than finish paints. A good primer is the best place to layer good finish paint.



Tip: Buy a separate primer matched to ≈90% of the finish paint color. Most paint stores can do this for you.

Tools You'll Need

Long handle sander

Good, wide roller pan,

Rollers and long handle for roller.

A good ladder and a good understanding of ladder safety.

Spackle to fill the old screw holes and seal the new screw holes.

Painter screen for inside the bucket,

Small 3.1/2" - 4" painters prep roller,

3" or 3 1/2" sash brush (the angled kind),

Phenoseal® to fill the baseboard to wall seams and seal trim butt seams.

Painters bucket

A caulking gun

