



## **Painting Tips from the Pros (and lessons learned from amateurs)**

Everybody thinks they know how to paint - and let's face it, it's not that hard. But to do a good job there are some common sense things to remember and remind your volunteers about. There are also a few simple tricks that you may not think about (and your volunteers certainly won't). When coaching, state the obvious, what's clear to one person may not be clear to another.

### **Don't put the paint on too thick.**

Dip the brush in the paint no more than half way up the bristles. Tap the brush on the side of the container; don't wipe the brush on the side of the can. This works only if the bucket or paint pot is not completely full of paint. A bucket or pot about 1/3 full works best for painting with a brush when you need to control the level of paint on the brush.

### **Don't mix two different kinds of paint.**

Mark cans and brushes with different color tape. Put one color tape on semi gloss cans, rollers and brushes; use a different color tape for flat cans, rollers and brushes. Semi gloss and flat paints of the same color look very similar in the cans, but look terrible if mixed on the walls. Set up two tarps or work areas outside and separate flat paint from semi-gloss paint. Place a sign on the tarp indicating the type of paint and where it is to be used. People understand where they are working and it makes it easier to get the correct paint if you label it that way.

### **Remember you're on a ladder.**

Don't climb too high or reach too far. Extension ladders must have a spotter. Chairs, boxes, paint cans and counter tops *are not ladders*. Don't climb up on them to paint. Set the angle of the ladder so that when you are standing on a rung with your arms stretched straight in front of you, you should be able to grasp the rung naturally. Your body should be straight up and down. Also, the ladder must be straight vertically. Do not lean to one side or the other. Don't place small rocks, or bricks, or pieces of wood under one leg to level the ladder. Push the bottom legs into the ground if possible for additional stability. Some ladders have flat or pointed feet that can be flipped; pointed feet for the ground and flat feet for solid surfaces.

### **Roll paint along the edges for a consistent texture.**

Brush the edges, then immediately roll it with a four inch roller. Roll the paint as close as you can to the edge without bumping the opposite wall or slopping paint on the trim.

### **Roll the full height of the wall and keep a wet edge.**

Paint the entire wall in one session and don't let the roller become nearly dry. Feather out the edges if you can't keep a wet edge.

## **Protect the floors.**

### **Best Method:**

Use canvas drop cloths rather than plastic if possible. Old bed sheets work well too. Drips stay wet on plastic and can get on shoes to be tracked throughout the house. Check your shoes before stepping off plastic drop cloths. *Never use the cheap, flimsy thin plastic "furniture covers" as drop cloths on the floor.* They are meant to be used to cover furniture. They are too light and flimsy to be used on the floor. They tear easily, get tracked on, blow away and stick to shoes.

### **Alternate Methods:**

Home Depot offers "Temporary Carpet Protection" (carpet shield). It's plastic, but has a sticky film and is heavier than the furniture covers. The sticky film keeps it in place. Also put some by the doors, especially if it's a wet, muddy day. Since it is plastic, paint drops will stay wet for a long while. DO NOT stick this stuff to hard floors, it is only meant for carpet. On hard floors, use rosin paper (available at home centers). CAUTION- Rosin paper has some red pigment in it. If it gets wet, the color can bleed out and stain the floor under it. If it is a rainy day, don't use rosin paper. You could put plastic down first, then the rosin paper on top to absorb drips. Use heavy plastic and secure both with tape. It can be taped to the floors with masking tape.

## **Good prep work is the key to a good paint job.**

**Clean dirty surfaces so the paint can form a strong bond.**

Paint doesn't stick well to dirty, greasy walls. Use TSP or similar cleaner to clean surfaces. Heavy marks may need to be washed and primed with Kilz before the final coat. Make sure tape is straight and tight to the places it is meant to protect such as trim and windows.

### **Prime and texture all patches to avoid a blotchy finish.**

Patch holes, allow to dry and sand smooth. Large areas may need a primer with the same texture roller as the final coat. The porous fillers absorb the paint dulling the surface, that's why you need primer. The smooth surface, versus a slightly textured surface from the roller, also sticks out like a sore thumb. Roll on the primer and feather out the edges. When dry, roll on the final color coat. On plaster walls you may need to use spackle to patch the problems and this is a little more difficult to work with. Use dry wall mud whenever possible because it is easier to work with and sand when completed. Reminder these patches always shrink when dry and you need to put enough patch on the blemish. Don't create too big of a patch since it will be more work to sand.

### **Paint the trim first, then the ceiling and then the walls.**

It may be tough to do all the painting in this order on the same day with several people painting. The big thing is not to get the wet paint of one type on wet paint from an adjacent area. If the ceiling and trim are being painted with the same type and color of

paint as the walls then you can paint them both at the same time. If not, paint the ceiling first. 1) If it's 'ceiling white' then painting it after the walls may result in spray going on to the newly painted wall. 2) painting the ceiling first allows you to paint all of the corners where the ceiling meets the wall without worrying about overlapping on the wall; then it is easier to cut in when you paint the wall because you are painting the edge in front of you rather than painting the edge above your head. If the trim is a different paint and you paint it first you will then have to tape the trim to paint the wall which, because it will not be fully dry, will cause the tape not to stick or will pull the paint off when you remove the tape.

### **Clean out the brushes.**

In order for brushes to be returned to RTA Housing they must be clean and dry. Even a little bit of paint allowed to dry in the brushes will ruin them. Use an assembly line of three to five 5-gallon buckets. Fill each bucket with water and line up in a row. Wipe out as much paint of the brushes as you can on cardboard, rosin paper or newspaper or wipe with a rag. Swish the brushes in the first bucket, wipe with a clean rag, and then swish in the next bucket down the line, continuing until clean. Wipe the clean brush with a dry rag, wrap in a paper towel and secure with a rubber band. This will help keep the bristles straight with no loose bristles sticking out. Several brushes can be cleaned in a row this way.

When the first bucket gets dirty, dump it out in the toilet, fill with clean water and make it the last bucket. Repeat this process as needed. DO NOT dump the dirty water down a storm drain or onto the ground. Paint trays can be cleaned in a similar way, but they don't fit in the buckets. Use rags dipped in the buckets in a serial fashion. Don't bother to clean the roller covers, it's not worth it. Place a small plastic grocery bag over the roller cover and pull it off the frame and discard the cover. Wipe the roller frame off with a damp rag. The frames do not have to have every bit of paint removed to be salvageable. Get most of it off and be sure the cylinder rotates freely after all the paint is dry. Poles can be quickly wiped down to get large blobs of paint off and saved to be used another day.