

## Paint Care

You should check painted surfaces twice a year so you catch problems early and thus minimize paint failures. In addition to assessing and treating dirt, chalking, mildew, and efflorescence, look for cracking or checking, blistering, peeling, serious fading, loss of gloss, and signs of rusting -- and treat these conditions immediately. Chips, scratches and other breaks in the surface of the paint must be repainted promptly, or serious damage to the underlying wood could result.

### Exterior Paint

Check the painted/stained surfaces of your home's exterior annually. If you repaint before there is much chipping or wearing away of the original finish, you will save the cost of extensive surface preparation. It is a wise maintenance policy to plan on refinishing the exterior surface of your home approximately every two to four years (or as often as your paint manufacturer suggests for your area and climate).

The chemical structure of the paint used on the exterior is governed by the climatic conditions. Over a period of time, this finish will fade and dull a bit. Wood trim painted white or light colours will more readily show grain and cracks and will therefore require additional maintenance.

### Removing Chalked Paint

Accumulated dirt can darken paint and provide nutrients for mildew. Weathering can cause release of chalky pigment, fading the colors. Both dirt and chalk can be removed by scrubbing or power washing. Scrubbing is best done with a mild detergent and a scrub brush, followed by thorough rinsing. Harsh, alkaline cleaners, such as TSP, can reduce the gloss of alkyd paints and of some latex paints. Power wash with plain water, without cleaning agents. Use care to not lift the paint or to damage the substrate.

### Removing Efflorescence

Efflorescence is a film of white, powdery salts carried out to the surface of masonry by water within the substrate. Remove any buildup of efflorescence with a stiff wire brush; wear eye and skin protection and a dust mask. If possible, identify and eliminate the water causing the efflorescence. Where necessary, prime with a latex masonry primer, and repaint.

### Interior Paint

Please be aware that all paint is subject to yellowing and discolouration. The action of the sun usually minimizes yellowing on exterior surfaces. However, yellowing can be noticeable on interior surfaces. Yellowing is caused by the natural drying and aging of the paint and by exposure to certain chemicals such as ammonia fumes and others that are found in some household cleaners. Light colours and white painted surfaces are more subject to yellowing than darker colours.

Yellowing of oil-based paints is unavoidable. Because yellowing tends to take place over time and relatively evenly on given surfaces, it may not be noticeable until you use touch up paint.

Interior woodwork, as well as the bathrooms and kitchen walls, are generally painted with a latex paint. These areas may be wiped down with a soft sponge and soapy water.

Painted interior walls are not "scrub-proof". Scrubbing or harsh cleaners will remove paint. Also, you should avoid washing newly painted interior surfaces for at least three months after you move into your home or after re-painting, to allow the paint to fully set.

When doing paint touch-ups, use a small brush, applying paint only to the spot needing attention. Filler may be used to cover any small defects prior to paint touch up. Touch-ups will sometimes be visible. When it is time to repaint a room, prepare the wall surfaces first by cleaning with a mild soap and water mixture or a reliable cleaning product.

## Eliminating Mold and Mildew

For all their protective qualities, all paints, especially flat paints, oil-base paints, and economy formulations, can provide a great growth medium for mold and mildew. These fungi love damp and shaded conditions, so on the exterior, check northern exposures thoroughly. On the inside, check laundry rooms, bathrooms, and basements. Wherever you find these conditions, household bleach is the solution. Protect plantings, grass, and interior floors with plastic and scrub the affected paint with a 3-to-1 water-bleach mix and a stiff scrub brush. Work the solution into the surface 1 foot beyond the affected area and let it set for 20 minutes, keeping it wet as it sits. Then rinse the area thoroughly.

## Dealing with Dirt

Most dirt on exterior paints is airborne and can be removed with a pressure washer as shown below. Dirt on interior paint is usually in the form of handprints around switches and knobs; splashes in kitchen and bathrooms; marks on hallways and corridors; or "soot" above lamps and other heat sources. Removing dirt before it accumulates not only keeps the paint looking tidy, it prohibits dirt from permanently embedding itself in the paint film. Check for dirt and assume you'll find it near cooking areas and at all places at hand height. Always begin cleaning with a mild detergent and a sponge or soft cloth and work up to harsher cleaners only when necessary. Alkaline cleaners can dull the sheen of glossy paints. Abrasive cleaners will burnish nearly any paint, and will dull the gloss of satin, semigloss, and gloss products. Rinse the surfaces thoroughly to keep residual cleaner from interfering with the adhesion of new paint.

## Touchy Touch-Ups

Just when you've finished artfully touching up a damaged surface, and after the paint has dried, you take another look at your handiwork only to find that the area you've touched up looks glaringly different from the rest of the wall. Touch-ups can look lighter or darker than the original color, they can have a different sheen, and they can stick out from the surface, depending on how much paint you apply.

### To minimize these effects:

- Apply an appropriate primer, especially if you have removed some paint from the area.
- Tint your touch-up paint -- this may mean taking a chip of the old paint to your supplier to match a faded color.
- When spraying, backroll the final coat to create a less uniform surface that will hide later touch-ups more easily.
- Apply the touch-up paint in a thin coat with a foam brush. Dab the brush to mimic the texture of the rolled surface.

## Unsticking Painted Edges

Painted surfaces usually stick together because they come into contact before the paint dries. Dark colors stick more than light ones, and glossier paints stick more than flats. Allow ample drying time before putting a painted area back into service. If surfaces stick, rub them with talcum powder. Plasticizers in window and door gaskets can soften latex paint and cause sticking, so avoid painting the gasket.

## Crayon Marks

Soften up crayon marks with a hair dryer and blot up the marks with a heavy-duty paper towel or soft rag. Keep the dryer close enough to the wall to soften the crayon but not the paint. You can also try to soften the crayon by running a warm iron over an old rag placed over the area.

## Keeping Track

Many times you'll have to repaint a cleaned or repaired area, and you'll need to know the color of the original paint. To keep track of the colors in each room, dab the paint on the back of a switchplate. Note the brand and name of the paint on tape and put it on the back of the switchplate too.

## Scrubbing Paint Stains

Fast action is the best way to ensure that stains don't evolve from a temporary blemish to a permanent mark in the paint film. In time, chemicals in the stain can bond with those in the paint and become tougher to get out. You can kill mildew with a bleach solution, but try hydrogen peroxide first. It's milder and might not fade the color of your paint. To clean dirt from gloss paints, use a mild detergent and increase its concentration only if the stain proves stubborn.