

INTERIOR PAINTING

SKILL LEVEL



No special skills are needed in order to paint and decorate successfully - attention to detail is the key to it all.

SAFETY FIRST

Even when working just a couple of feet off the floor, always use a strong stepladder - never stand on a chair or other 'hop-up'. Use protective clothing when necessary.

INTRODUCTION

Painting is a cheap and easy way to give your home a new look.

To get the best results when painting, choose good materials and equipment; keep brushes and other tools clean and in good condition.

Never skimp on preparation work or you'll be disappointed with the finished results. Take time to rub down surfaces properly and fill cracks and holes neatly. Only start painting when surfaces are smooth, clean and dry.

2 - Preparing a room

Clear as much furniture from the room as possible. Whatever has to remain should be gathered in the middle of the floor. Vacuum the room thoroughly. Use dustsheets to cover furniture and floor coverings.

Remove all fixtures and fittings from walls and doors. In the long run, it is far quicker to do this rather than to try and paint around them, which leads to paint runs and smudging on the fitting itself. With electrical fittings, turn off the power before loosening switches, ceiling roses, etc.

Mask off window-panes and woodwork using masking tape, newspaper and polythene dustsheets.

3 - Preparing walls and ceilings

If there are any damp patches on walls and ceilings, find out the cause and remedy it first. There's no point in trying to paint over dampness, because it will probably cause the paint to flake off quickly and the damp patch will seep through again anyway. When the damp patch has dried, it should be primed with a damp seal. Watermarks will seep through even several coats of emulsion.

Use sugar soap or mild detergent and a large decorator's sponge to wash down all surfaces, starting with the ceiling. Rinse thoroughly, but do not saturate the surfaces. Allow to dry before painting. Make sure that electrical fittings are protected from water. Plaster surfaces tarnished by nicotine

stains need to be coated with a stain block or nicotine block before painting.

In older houses, you can still find walls and ceilings coated with distemper, and paint will not adhere to this. You can tell if this is the case, because the powdery coating will come off when you wash down the surface. Distemper is best removed. Wet the distemper thoroughly with water and remove with a nylon-scouring pad, or for thicker layers, scrape off as much of it as possible. Use a stabilising solution over the area to bind any last traces of distemper.

Ceiling paper that is sound and well adhered can remain and be painted. Any loose edges can be stuck back with wallpaper adhesive or overlap adhesive and allowed to dry before painting. Loose or bubbled paper has to be stripped off. Remember that paper may have been applied to a wall or ceiling to hide minor cracks that are superficial but unsightly. If necessary, you may need to re-paper.

4 - Cracks and holes



Use interior filler to fill any small cracks and holes in plaster. Use a flexible filling knife to force the filler into the hole (1).



Leave the filler slightly proud of the surface, allow it to dry, then rub it smooth with dry sandpaper wrapped around a wooden block (2). You may need to repeat the process in some areas for a really smooth finish.

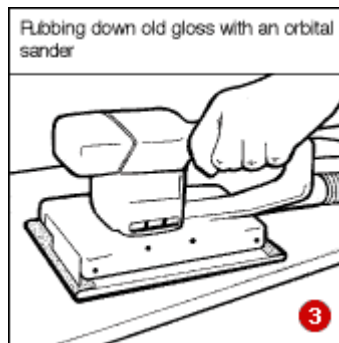
Larger holes and cracks are more economically filled with deep-repair filler, or a plaster filler. Check manufacturer's instructions for use - a larger crack may have to be filled in a couple of stages. Any loose plaster should be chipped off first. Where a surface is sound but covered with a network of crazed superficial cracks, you can use a textured flexible paint, or first hang lining paper. Alternatively, use a textured wallcovering that is specifically made to be overpainted and

ideal for uneven walls.

5 - Preparing woodwork

If existing paintwork is in a sound condition, there is no need to strip it off - it will make a good base for the new paint. The only exception is where a thick coat of paint is causing windows or doors to jam.

If the paint is to remain, then it should be washed down with sugar soap and water to remove all traces of dust, grease and stains. Rinse thoroughly.



Rubbing down old gloss with an orbital sander

Rub down the surface with medium-grade sandpaper, or an orbital sander fitted with a medium-grade sanding sheet (3). This roughens the surface, giving a good key for the new paint to adhere to. Always wear a facemask when sanding (please refer to the section 'Lead in Paint').

Finally, wipe over the surface with a lint-free rag moistened with white spirit. Use a pointed stick to get the rag into corners where dust can be trapped - it may be picked up on the brush and spread across the surface to leave a pimply effect on the dried paintwork. Don't forget to clean out keyholes and the top edges of doors where dirt and dust can be picked up on the brush.

Paintwork that has the odd chip or crack need not be stripped off. Fill any chips and holes with interior filler or a wood filler and sand it flush with the surface when the filler has dried.



Stripping old paint with a heat gun

If the paintwork is in bad condition and has lots of cracks and flaking areas, then it is best to strip it off back to bare wood. You can strip paint by dry sanding, with a chemical paint stripper or with a heat gun (4). Dry sanding with sandpaper is not recommended for anything other than the smallest area, and even then it is advisable to wear a facemask. Chemical stripper, in the form of

pastes, gels and liquids, is best where you suspect that the old paint may have contained lead. See the section 'Lead in

paint' for details. However, it is a much lengthier process than using heat, and more costly. A hot-air gun melts the thickest paint coat so that it can be scraped off with a shave hook. It is best to use a chemical stripper near to windows where heat can crack the glass. Bare wood should be rubbed down with medium sandpaper or an electric sander.

Bare wood will need treating before painting. Knots must be treated with knotting. This prevents the resin seeping out and staining the paintwork. To seal the surface, use a wood primer before undercoating and then painting your surface.

6 - Preparing varnish

Like paint, there is no need to strip sound varnish. If it needs to come off then remove it just like paintwork. Fill any holes and cracks with woodfiller, sand down surfaces lightly, wipe over with white spirit and then start varnishing.

7 - Preparing metal

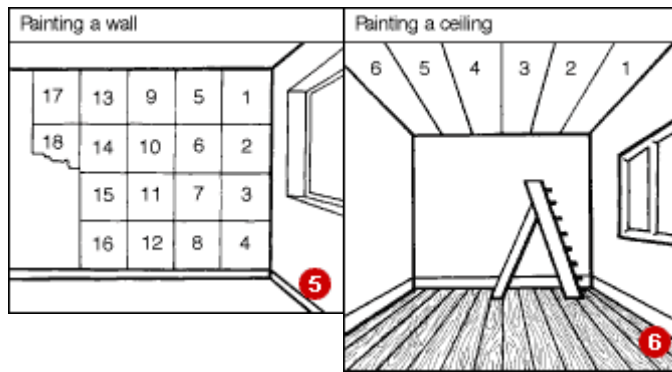
Iron or steel windows can rust, and if this is happening all traces need to be removed. Small patches can be treated with emery cloth or wire wool, but larger areas need wire brushing, either with a hand-held brush or a wire cup brush fitted to an electric drill. Always wear a facemask and safety goggles.

Rust can reform overnight, so fill any holes with a filler suitable for metal, then apply a coat of metal primer as soon as possible. Aluminium just needs to be washed with sugar soap and rubbed down with medium-grade sandpaper. There are various primers available, for both ferrous and non-ferrous metals.

8 - Painting ceilings and walls

Bare plaster needs to be sealed before applying emulsion paint. This can be done with a plaster sealer, dilute PVA sealer, or a diluted coat of emulsion. You do not need to prime a surface that has been painted previously, except the areas you have had to fill and repair.

Always plan to decorate a ceiling or a complete wall in one work session. If you take a break and the paint dries, a paint line will show where you stopped and restarted.



Start painting at the main window and work back into and around the room (5 & 6). This makes it easier to see what you are doing.

If using a roller, first paint a narrow band, using a brush, along all edges and into corners where the roller won't reach; this is called cutting in. Brushes are best held like a pen and paint applied with even strokes.

Do not dip your brush too far into the paint, a third of the brushes bristles is enough. Make sure you feather the edges of the paint so you do not leave a hard edge that is difficult to blend and cover.

Tip some paint into the well of the roller tray and load the roller by dipping and rolling it in the paint and running it backwards and forwards on the slope of the tray, completely and evenly covering the roller sleeve.

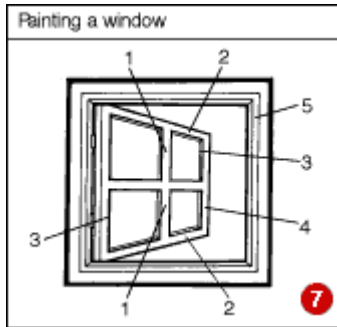
Now apply the paint with the roller in a zigzag motion over the surface and work systematically across the room. Paint the ceiling in 600mm (2ft) bands, and on walls work downwards from the top to the skirting.

Paint pads are also used in zigzag directions, working quickly to join up wet edges.

9 - Painting woodwork

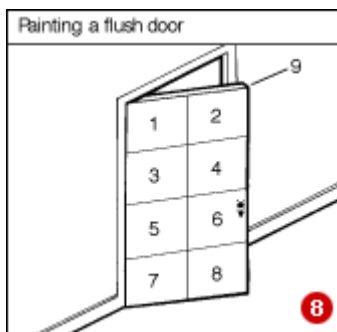
Always use a primer on bare wood first to help seal the surface. Where a surface has already been painted, use the undercoat colour recommended by the manufacturers of your chosen gloss or satin paint. In some cases it might require a second undercoat to completely obliterate the old paint. It is important that you do this or the colour will show through the new coat of paint. When each coat has dried, sand down lightly with medium-grade sandpaper and wipe with a lint-free cloth moistened with white spirit, before applying the next coat.

When painting woodwork, apply the paint with the grain and then, without reloading the brush, work it across the grain, and finish with the grain. Then reload and move on to the next section, joining up wet edges quickly. Do not over brush areas that have already started to dry.



Start painting window frames from the edge closest to the glass and work outwards (7). If an open window is a security risk, complete it early in the day so that it is dry for closing by night. Use a 25mm (1in) and 50mm (2in) brush for covering narrow and wider sections, respectively.

It is recommended to take a margin of about 3mm of paint onto the glass - this prevents condensation running down into the frame causing it to rot. Masking tape stuck in place on the glass, or a paint shield, will ensure a neat finish around window frames.



Paint a flush door using a 75mm (3in) wide brush or a small foam roller. Start at the top corner of the hinge side and work in square sections across and down the door, finishing at the bottom corner on the handle side (8).

With a panelled door, it is best to work with a couple of brushes - a 25mm (1in) one for mouldings and a 50mm (2in) or foam roller for the wider areas. First paint the moulded areas around the panel then paint in the panels. Then paint in the centre verticals, followed by the cross rails. Finish off by painting the outside verticals followed by the edge of the door.

10 - Painting radiators

The best paints to use are special radiator enamels, as these will give you a tough and durable surface that will not discolour with the heat. However, solvent-based gloss or satin can also be used to good effect. Only paint a radiator when it is cold and don't turn it back on until the paint is thoroughly dried. There may be a paint smell initially when

the radiator is warmed, but this will soon dissipate. Don't paint the radiator connections and valves.

It is not recommended to use emulsion paint or some water-based paints on radiators as they are not tough enough. There are now, however, some water-based paints available that can be used to paint walls and woodwork, as well as radiators. Always follow the instructions on the tin for individual products.

11 - Lead in paint

Up until the mid-sixties, lead was used in some kinds of paint, especially those used on wood and metal work. This is a hazardous substance, especially for young children and pregnant women, and should always be handled with care. Lead can be absorbed into the body through the skin or by inhalation of dust particles. The danger occurs if the paintwork is loose and flaking, or if it is likely to get knocked, chewed or scratched by a child or a pet. This could potentially release lead dust into the house.

If your house was built after the sixties, it is unlikely that paint containing lead was used. But any house built before the sixties, even if it has been painted since then, most likely has some lead-based painted woodwork. If you are in any doubt, there are lead-testing kits available that are quick and easy to use.

If your old painted surface is in good condition - not flaking or chipped - it is best left alone. You can paint over this surface sealing the old paint in.

If it is necessary to remove the old paint, then the best way to do this is to use a liquid chemical paint stripper, as this will not release harmful dust.

You can also use a hot-air gun, but use only enough heat to soften the paint - burning it will release fumes. Set your heat gun to below 450 °C.

- Do not use an electric sander
- Wear protective clothing and a suitable facemask
- Clear the room as much as possible
- Seal the work area from the rest of the house and cover carpets
- Open windows for plenty of ventilation
- Keep other people away from the working area - especially children and pregnant women
- When taking a break, store the clothes you have been wearing in a sealed bag and wash any bare skin carefully as soon as you finish working
- Do not eat or drink while you are working

- When most of the paint has been removed, moisten the surface and smooth it with wet-and-dry paper - not sandpaper
- When the paint has been removed, collect all paint peelings as you work and put them in a sealed plastic bag for collection by your refuse collector
- Clean the room with water and detergent. Hire an industrial-standard vacuum cleaner (British Standard 5415) to clean carpets and to make sure all traces of dust are removed from the house

If you are not confident about dealing with lead in paint correctly and safely, call in a reputable, professional decorating firm.