

PAINTING PROBLEMS

SKILL LEVEL



To achieve top-quality painting results simply requires the use of good equipment and materials, meticulous preparation and careful application of the paint.

SAFETY FIRST

Although painting is the most popular of all DIY tasks, it has its own real danger areas which can cause problems. These are all avoidable by taking simple, common-sense measures.

INTRODUCTION

Basic skills and taking the time to work to simple guidelines are all that are needed to avoid painting problems.

Most problems encountered in painting can be avoided simply by taking the time to prepare all surfaces, materials and equipment thoroughly. Never rush the job or attempt to cut corners - this will lead to problems and a disappointing finish, requiring costly and time-consuming remedial work to put things right.

2 - Fault finder

Painting problems arise from an error in preparation, poor working conditions, using low-grade equipment, or incorrect application of the paint. Using too much paint on the brush, and painting on a dirty, greasy or wet surface are typical mistakes. Here are some commonly found faults, and what you can do to prevent and rectify them.

3 - Brushmarks

Failing to rub smooth a poor surface or using a low-grade brush with an inadequate amount of bristles are basic faults. Wash surfaces thoroughly, rub down, then wipe with a lint-free cloth dampened with white spirit.

4 - Flaking

Poor surface preparation can cause paint to flake away. On woodwork, painting over dust and grease is the likely cause. Remove wax polish from skirtings. On walls and ceilings, applying emulsion over an unclean surface, old distemper or dampness is the fault.

If distemper is present it has to be removed or sealed. You will only find distemper in older houses which have not been decorated for many years. If you suspect it might be present, test by wetting it with water - if it's distemper, the water will dissolve it and it will come away. Wet and scrape away any loose distemper, then apply a plaster sealer

5 - No hiding power

If the previous coat is still visible, then it is likely that no

undercoat has been used, or the undercoat was the wrong colour. Overthinning the paint, overbrushing, or understirring can also be the cause. Where necessary, use an extra undercoat.

6 - Loss of gloss

When gloss paint loses its shine, not allowing sufficient drying time between coats can be the problem. Overbrushing the paint or overthinning the paint may also be causes. Painting in very cold conditions is another factor.

7 - Runs



If the paint is applied too thickly or is not brushed out enough, then runs and wrinkles will result. A common cause is trying to paint around fittings such as door handles. Apart from the likelihood of smudging paint onto the fitting, it is far better to remove all fittings before painting (1).

The only remedy is to allow the paint to harden for a week, then rub down smooth with wet-and-dry paper before repainting.

8 - Specks and pimples

Caused by dust and specks getting into the paint. In outside work especially, wind-blown dust can get into the paint tin contaminating the whole batch. This can be avoided by transferring small amounts of paint into a paint kettle - so if dust does get in, only a little will be affected and this can be discarded.



Remove dust from the lid of the paint tin (2). Dust on surfaces can also be picked up on the brush bristles and spread onto the work.



Make certain that corners are cleaned out by tying a lint-free cloth around a pointed stick, dampening it with white spirit and cleaning out the corner thoroughly (3).



Also make sure that keyholes, top edges of doors and other nooks and crannies are cleaned (4).

If a whole tin of paint is contaminated, then strain it into a clean container through muslin stretched over the top.

Treat the problem the same as for runs.

9 - Blisters

These are caused by painting on a wet surface, or onto old, soft or lifting paint. Again, treat the problem as for runs.

10 - Yellow stains on gloss

This happens when resin from a knot in the surface of wood starts to bleed through to the paint surface. This is prevented by coating the knots with a liquid called shellac knotting which is effectively a sealer. If staining occurs, you have to strip off the paint and redecorate.

11 - Damp patches



Where dampness caused by rainwater or a plumbing leak leaves a stain on a wall or ceiling, painting over it will not solve the problem as the patch will reappear. Large areas should be coated with aluminium primer sealer before using emulsion; for economy, where only a small area is concerned, you can

use an aerosol (5).

12 - Fluff on paint

Usually the result of someone's fluffy clothes brushing

against the wet paint. Typically, this happens when painting a door and leaning against a wet door frame. This can be avoided by painting the door and frame on different days. Proceed as for treating runs.

13 - Equipment

Buy good-quality brushes. These have long, densely packed bristles which hold the paint well and give good coverage. Poor-quality brushes have short, sparse bristles which give uneven coverage.

A good-quality brush, if looked after, will last a long time and prove more economical in the end.



Dampen new brushes and run them over clean brickwork

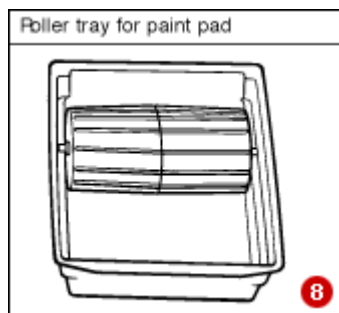
Even a top-quality brush will shed a few bristles at first. So, before using it, dampen it in clean water and run it over clean brickwork to get rid of dust and loose bristles (6).

Buy a good-quality roller as it will give even coverage. A poor-quality foam roller will give uneven coverage and tends to spatter the paint around.



Shaggy pile roller being used on a textured ceiling

Match the roller to the surface - the smoother the surface, the shorter the roller pile needs to be. A heavily textured surface needs a shaggy sheepskin-style roller (7).

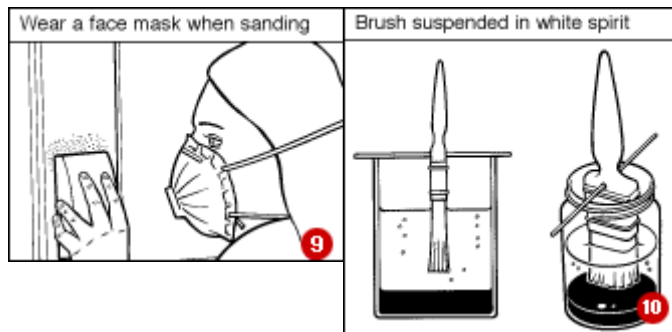


Roller tray for paint pad

Paint pads can give uneven coverage by being incorrectly loaded. It's best to buy a special tray which has a roller on one side; if the pad is dragged across, even coverage is virtually assured (8).

14 - Safety

- Left-over paint should be stored in dry, secure conditions out of the reach of children.



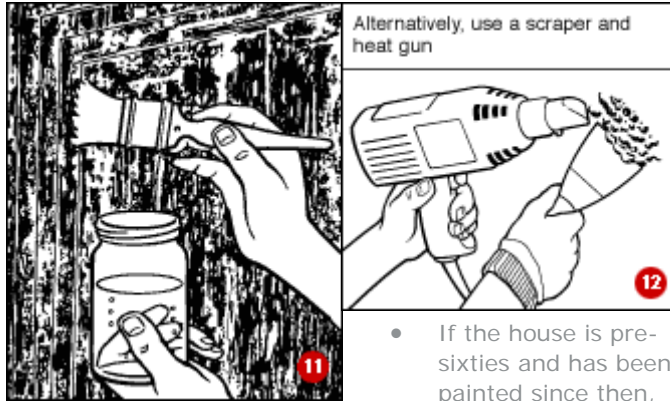
- Always keep children and animals away from the area when painting.
- Open doors and windows to ensure plenty of ventilation when painting and while it is drying.
- If possible, remove furniture and furnishings or cover them completely.
- Wear protective clothing when preparing and painting surfaces, especially when you are working overhead and when sanding (9).
- When suspending brushes in brush cleaner or white spirit, allow them to stand in a safe environment for a week. The liquid can then be poured out for reuse, and the hardened sediment at the bottom of the jar can be discarded safely (10).
- Never throw left-over materials down the drain as residues such as paint and white spirit can contaminate the water supply. Take them to the local council waste-disposal depot where they can be dealt with safely.
- Always read carefully the instructions on paints and other materials before use.

15 - Lead in paint

Up until the mid-sixties, lead was used to make some kinds of paint. Young children and pregnant women are most at risk from lead poisoning. Lead can be absorbed into the body through the skin or by inhalation of particles.

The danger where lead is present is if the paintwork gets knocked or is chewed or scratched by a child or a pet, or damaged in another way, releasing lead dust into the house.

- If your house was built after the sixties, it is unlikely that lead paint was used. If it was built before the sixties and has not been decorated since, then there could be some lead around.



- If the house is pre-sixties and has been painted since then,

any lead in previous coats of paint will be sealed in and there is no problem provided the paint is in good condition - not flaking or chipped - and you don't plan to strip it off to redecorate.

- Old paint that contains lead is most easily dealt with (provided it is in good condition) by painting over it with a modern lead-free paint.
- If old paint is to be removed, then use a stripping method that doesn't create dust, such as a solvent or caustic-based liquid stripper (11).
- If using a hot-air gun, use only enough heat to soften the paint (12) - burning it will release fumes. Set your heat gun to below 450oC.
- Wear protective clothing and a good-quality face mask. Seal the work area and keep other people away - 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.
- 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 peelings from the room and put them in a sealed plastic bag for collection by your refuse collector.
- Clean the room with water and detergent. To clean up properly, hire an industrial-standard vacuum cleaner (British Standard 5415).
- If you are not confident about dealing with lead in paint correctly and safely, call in a reputable, professional decorating firm.

