

Re-Painting? Know the Essentials

Painting interior walls is a relatively easy and cheap way to transform the rooms of your home while protecting overall resale value. Aside from adding personality and drama, re-painting protects the surface from moisture and fading. Here are a few things to know before you start planning your DIY masterpiece.

Sheen/Luster - A paint's "sheen" classifies its degree of shine. *Flat* paint is the dullest of the sheens and is best used in low activity areas such as hallways and dining rooms, or on ceilings. *Eggshell* (sometimes "low-luster") has more shine than flat and is easier to wash. Eggshell finishes are appropriate for bedrooms and living rooms. *Semigloss* and *glossy* sheens reflect light for a brighter look. Both are durable and easy to wash, although glossy sheens will highlight any imperfections on a wall or surface. Semigloss sheen finishes are good choices for bathrooms and kitchens, while glossy finishes are often reserved for trim, railings, cabinetry and doors.

Quality - While it may be tempting to save money by buying cheaper paint, you will likely end up paying for it in the long run. High quality paint has higher pigment levels and a higher percentage of titanium dioxide, which increases coverage ability and improves durability. Their heavier bodies will go on smoother with less splattering and fewer applications, and will resist fading over time.

Color - Darker hues are known to add interest or warmth to a room, while lighter colors can open up a room and make it seem more spacious. Painting one wall with a rich color can add new drama to the space. In terms of durability, colors such as white, brown tend to fade less than brighter greens, yellows and blues.

Testing - Paint chips and samples can help you whittle down color options, but the best test of a paint color is to see the hue on the intended surface during different lighting conditions. Purchase quart or sample sizes of your top paint choices to get the best feel for the paint's affect on its surroundings.

Amount - 1 gallon of paint will typically cover 350 square feet of surface. Multiply the width of your walls by the height of the room to determine the total square footage you need to cover. Some manufacturers provide coverage calculators that will help you determine how many gallons of paint you will need.

Preparation - Paint adheres best to clean, uniform walls. Scrape clear any flaking paint and spackle in holes and cracks. Wash walls with a trisodium phosphate solution. Use plenty of painter's tape on baseboards, moldings and windowpanes. Applying a primer will conceal stains and ensure uniform color and absorption.

Equipment - Latex paints are best used with nylon brushes (or rollers), while natural brushes (or rollers) work best for oil-based paint. 3-4 inch wall brushes work well on large, flat surfaces. Angled sash brushes are ideal for detailed areas, and trim brushes are perfect for doors and window frames. Paint rollers work well on rough or textured surfaces. The rougher the surface, the longer the roller nap should be.

Prepping For a Last-Minute Showing

It's nearly impossible to keep your home in a "show-ready" state day in and day out. In many cases you may find that your home will be shown to a prospective buyer with very little advance notice.

Even if you're keeping things as clutter-free as possible, a little preparation for the actual showing is probably in order. Here are some short-term ways to get your home looking and feeling its best.

Step 1: Cleaning Frenzy

- Scrub tile in the kitchen and bathrooms.
- Thoroughly clean hardwood floors.
- Vacuum carpets. If time permits, rent a steam cleaner to shampoo carpets, particularly in high traffic areas.
- Dust all wood furniture, TV screens and computer monitors.
- Clear counters of all clutter. If time permits, move unnecessary appliances and decorating touches into storage areas.
- Clear the kitchen sink and counters of all dirty dishes.
- Pick up all dirty laundry. Avoid over-filling any open air hampers - laundry is better kept out of sight inside your washer or dryer.
- Remove stains from bathtubs, toilets and sinks.

Step 2: Critical Eye Test

- After doing the first round of cleaning, take a walk through the house with the perspective of a buyer. Look for clutter, excess furniture or highly personal touches that might turn off prospective buyers.
- Try taking pictures of main rooms with a digital camera for an "instant review".

Step 3: Curb Appeal Checkup

- Sweep the entryway, porch and walkways.
- Mow and water the lawn.
- Store any toys or garden equipment.
- Clean up pet droppings.
- Clean gutters and downspouts.
- Add potted plants to the porch or deck.

Step 4: Closing Touches

- Turn on all lights.
- Open drapes and blinds.
- Open windows to let in fresh air.
- Burn scented candles or open jars of lightly scented potpourri. If you don't have either on hand, you can always bake cookies (the oldest trick in the book) or simmer a few drops of vanilla extract on the stove.
- Turn off all TV's, stereos and computers.
- If possible, relocate pets to a friend or neighbor's home during the showing.
- Clean the litter box thoroughly to rid your home of smells. If pets can be temporarily relocated, remove the litter box entirely.
- Hang fresh towels in every bathroom.
- Put fresh liquid soap or bar soap in each bathroom.
- Remove rugs to showcase hardwood floors.
- Put out fresh flowers and fill candy dishes.