Painting Techniques: Brushing Up on What's Involved

Most of us don't paint on a regular basis. So, when the time arrives for us to begin this process, have the following tips handy. They apply for projects regardless of whether you are the painter, or you have hired a painting professional.

The Basics

Time. Factor in time for prep work. Also, allow approximately 30 to 60 minutes per 100 square feet for actual painting.

Tools

- Use paint rollers for the large areas. A good synthetic roller cover works as well as a lamb's wool roller. Rollers also come in many different types, and naps differ according to use.
- Use brushes for smaller areas. Buy either synthetic or natural bristles (recommended for oil-based paints). Most jobs require a 4" brush for "cutting in," a 2" brush for baseboards and trim, and a 1 1/2" to 2" angled sash brush for windows and smaller trim.
- Use specialized tools for corners, trim, and so on. For tight maneuvering in areas like small bathrooms and closets, consider using a paint pad.

Types of Paint

There are two types of paint: **oil-based** (alkyd-base) and **latex** (water-based).

- *Oil-based* paints are often applied over metal or wood, since they are more resistant to damage.
- *Latex* paints are generally used in areas where there is little need for frequent washing. Clean up with these paints requires only water and is much easier than with oil-based paints, which require a solvent.

For each type, you have your choice of the following:

- **Flat** hides surface imperfections as well as flat paint. Since it cannot be scrubbed clean like other finishes, avoid using in kitchens, bathrooms and high-traffic areas.
- **Satin** resists stains better than flat paint and can endure scrubbing. A good choice for walls in children's bedrooms, family rooms, hallways and stairways.
- **Semi-Gloss** is more stain and wear resistant than satin, and is a good choice for areas that receive lots of hard use (kitchen, bathrooms, kid's rooms, woodwork, etc.).
- **Gloss** has the highest level of stain and wear resistance. However, because of its high sheen, it highlights flaws on surfaces.

To estimate the amount of paint you'll need, use the following calculations:

- *Walls*. Multiply the perimeter of the room by the height to determine the square-foot area of the walls.
- *Ceilings*. Multiply the length by the width. A gallon of base coat covers 350 to 450 square feet.

Most Common Mistakes

The most common painting mistakes include the following:

- Not preparing a clean, sanded, and primed (if needed) surface.
- Applying too much paint to the applicator.
- Using water-logged applicators.
- Not solving dampness problems in the walls or ceilings.
- Not buying enough paint beforehand to avoid color-mismatch problems.

Painting Techniques: Color Your World!

The job of painting is not the physical task itself…but the design step in which we have to decide what our painted area needs to look like, and the best way to achieve the results.

Here's a simple approach that will help you decide how to add the right color(s) to the selected areas (either interior or exterior) of your personal canvas.

Step 1—Feeling

If you had to pick one or two words to describe the feeling or mood for the area you want to paint, what would they be? Soothing? Energetic? High-Tech? Luxurious? Comfortable? One of the easiest ways to identify this feeling is to select an item you already have that conveys this feeling. Typically, a painting or a piece of art is used for this type of approach. It provides visual cues as to the color, texture, pattern, etc. that coincides with the feeling you are trying to achieve.

Step 2—Effect

Long gone are the days of smooth, flat walls. Texture and patterns can be added to both enhance what you have, or hide what you don't want to see! The most commons effects today involving the "faux" finish where paint is used to give the impression of something else—e.g., stone, marble, etc. "Faux" painting techniques give you the look of wallpaper (without all the work), and the "permission" to make mistakes. There are lots of painting professionals on the market today who can transform a wall into almost anything you like. So, "think outside the paint can" and choose the effect that suits your needs (and not your artistic ability).

Step 3—Color Selection

With the abundance of colors and special effects, no color is totally "in" or "out." While green was the color for the 90's, and blue is the color for the millennium, the palette is wide open. Yet, to some of us, all those choices may not be a good thing! This is where a decorator or painting professional can be a great asset. He/she can help you select colors that convey the feeling and effect you want.

Step 4—Paint Quality

With paint, you do get what you pay for. Typically, the cheaper the paint, the more work is going to be required—e.g., prep time, coats, etc. Now, this doesn't mean you should buy the most expensive paint. Instead, know the goals for your painting project—i.e., you only have a weekend and it needs to cover in one coat, it needs to be resilient to lots of touching and bumping, etc.

The Results

If you've followed the above, you'll end up with a masterpiece that is sure to please you, and be thoroughly enjoyed by others!

Wallpaper Techniques: It's Not Just "Cut and Paste"

The decision to wallpaper versus paint is a big one. Almost everyone can paint; however, not everyone can wallpaper. Of any of the non-construction improvements you can make to your home, this is probably one where a professional is almost a "must have."

Because of the expanded interest in wall coverings, finding a professional is not a major undertaking. You can use someone as close as the stay-at-home mom down the street who has decorated her entire house, or bring in a top-notch professional through a decorating company.

In either case, you do need to be informed about the process.

The Basics

Before purchasing wall covering, some basic information needs to be gathered about the area to be papered:

- Determine where the rolls will be applied…specifically where the seams will meet.
- Consider if adjustments need to be made so that patterns match.
- Locate the point of mismatch where odd-shaped pieces will need to be cut. An inconspicuous corner is always best.
- Estimate the amount of paper required by using the following calculations:

  4. Multiply the perimeter of the room by the height of the walls to arrive at a total square footage.

  5. Divide this by 30. The average American single roll contains 35 to 36 square feet, but there will be losses due to trim and pattern matching waste. European papers contain 27 to 28 square feet per single roll and are packed in double rolls of 55 to 56 square feet per bolt. Use a figure around 24 for calculating Euro Rolls. As most US manufacturers also import and export, always be certain of roll sizes. Some pattern matching and shrinkage require more rolls (check with your supplier). This new number is your number of rolls if you had no openings.

  6. Subtract 1/2 roll for each normal size door or window opening. This number covers your final needs.

When it's time to finally make a purchase, remember two things:

- **Always purchase pre-pasted.** It saves tremendous time.
- **Buy all the rolls at one time.** This ensures that all the patterns are created in the same run so that they will match.

Most Common Mistakes

The most common wallpapering mistakes include the following:

- Not sanding, cleaning, and sizing the walls before applying the wallpaper.
- Failure to soak the pre-pasted wallpaper long enough.
- Failure to allow the wall covering to cure the proper amount of time after soaking.
- Not positioning the strips of the wallpaper level and plumb.
- Not getting air pockets out when smoothing the covering on the wall.
- Not planning for pattern match-up and extra on top and bottom before cutting each strip.
- Not estimating and ordering enough wallpaper for the job.
- Not overlapping the wallpapers that have a tendency to shrink.

Wallpaper Techniques: The "Ultimate" Wall Décor

Consider wallpaper as the "Rolls Royce" of wall decoration. It offers you the opportunity to add texture, pattern, or accent color to a room and with a tremendous amount of detail. Wallpaper can both create a mood, or used as a "backdrop" to highlight carpets, furniture and accessories.

Getting Started

Keep the following tips in mind, whether this is a "do it yourself" project, or one handled by a professional:

- Collect ideas, wallpaper samples, colors schemes, etc. in anticipation of your project. However, to maintain the uniqueness of your room, use these ideas only as indicators that show what you do/do not like.
- Decide on a budget at the beginning of the project. If funds are limited, decorate your rooms one at a time.
- Purchase the most pronounced items—such as carpet, furniture, and wallpaper--first.   Worry about accessories later!
- Buy wallpaper, fabric and floor coverings for their practical as well as decorative effect. Keep in mind kids, pets, lifestyle.

Likewise, you should also keep the following in mind:

- Avoid selecting wall coverings perceived as "trendy" or "faddish."
- Bypass products because they're a bargain. This type of project should be viewed as an investment, not a "great buy."
- Remember that wallpaper adds a tremendous amount of detail. So, you'll find that you'll need fewer furnishings.

Patterns

All wallpaper patterns fall into one of four basic styles: geometric, large print, small print and overall print.

- **Geometric patterns** include plaids, stripes and grids.
- **Large Prints** make a room seem smaller and feel more intimate.
- **Overall Prints** allows the human eye to blend the design together, minimizing pattern and emphasizing color.
- **Small Prints** add a touch of pattern to the overall background color, forming a subtle backdrop—ideal for kitchens, bathrooms, and other small spaces.

In addition, all wallpaper is given a *pattern number* and dye-lot or "*run*" number.

- A pattern number identifies a particular design and color way of a pattern.
- The dye-lot number represents a particular group of rolls that are printed on the same print run. **NEVER BUY ROLLS WITH DIFFERENT RUN NUMBERS!**

Wallpaper Backings

Since there are various types of backings, it might be best to consult with a decorating professional to help guide your selection.

- **Paper backings** are used on paper-backed vinyl, vinyl coated papers, and specialty products.
- **Latex acrylic backings** are used on fabric wall coverings to allow for stability, and improved hanging qualities.
- **Woven fabric backings** are commonly used for heavy traffic areas such as hallways in office buildings, etc.
- **Non-woven fabric backings** are used primarily in commercial installations because of their durability.