



Using paint to enhance your home

One of the easiest, most cost-efficient ways of enhancing your home is with paint. With the advances made in paint over the past decade, there's not much you can't do with it indoors and outdoors.

Gone are the days of the all-purpose can of paint. Today, there are paints available for specific materials and surfaces. Whether your floor is wood or concrete, there is a paint designed for use on it. There are even paints for metals, such as the smoke pipe of a stove, that heat up to extremely high temperatures.

Some paints are made for specific uses on appliances, cabinets, tile walls and floors, bathtubs and sinks. You can even produce a terrazzo look on floors or a textured effect on walls with the right kind of paint.

Before you begin any project, visit a paint dealer and discuss the kind of material you plan to paint, its condition and the result you want to see. There are so many paints on the market, you want to make sure you get just the right one. A paint that's good for interior woodwork, for instance, is not necessarily good for wood floors or outside wood trim. A paint intended for concrete walls won't necessarily hold up on a concrete floor. So, be specific.

To apply any paint all you need to do is follow the instructions on the paint can. These are usually very detailed. But, be sure to read them before you leave the store in case you have any questions. Also ask about any materials or tools that may be required for a particular type of paint.

Many paints are flammable and harmful if taken internally or inhaled. So, be sure to read the warning labels which are usually illustrated quite clearly on the container. Always keep any area where you are painting well-ventilated.

While a fresh coat of paint can easily transform any dull room, cupboard or furniture item, you can't expect all flaws to be magically concealed. Painting requires good surface preparation and some elbow grease before you can splash on new colors.

Start by filling in all holes and cracks with an appropriate filler. When the filler is dry, use a fine sandpaper and sand all surfaces lightly. Then wipe all surfaces to ensure they are dust-free.

Here are a few tips for different paint jobs:

Bathrooms and kitchens

- Because of high moisture, use an enamel rather than a flat paint for walls as well as woodwork.
- An enamel is easier to clean and less likely to be harmed by moisture. Epoxy paints will hold on sinks, bathtubs, ceramic tiles and other areas that are extremely smooth and exposed to water. These paints must be handled carefully and require good ventilation.

Basement

- A latex masonry paint is good for concrete basement walls. Many paints are designed to damp proof or water-proof basement walls. Their effectiveness depends on how well they are applied. However, it's virtually impossible to waterproof a basement from the inside by simply applying waterproof paint on the walls.
- Use heat-resistant enamels on any surface that gets hot, such as metal pipes. Concrete basement floors must be cleaned before painting. Use a cleaner recommended by the paint manufacturer.

Outdoors

- Any paint you use should be designed to withstand the weather. The surfaces—whether aluminum, iron, steel, brick, concrete, wood, wicker, etc.—must be prepared in advance as recommended by the paint manufacturer. Before starting any project, be sure to consult your local paint store representative for ideas and advice.