



# Maintaining Interior Paint

With Proper Maintenance, Quality Interior Paint  
Can Have An Extended Service Life

## A. Dealing with Dirt

Interior paint typically gets dirty in many situations: hand prints around switches and knobs; splashes in kitchen and bathrooms; marks on hallways and corridors; “soot” accumulating above electric lamps and other heat sources. Removing dirt before it accumulates not only improves appearance, it reduces chance of it getting permanently embedded in the paint film. While changing color is a good reason for painting, covering over dirty paint is generally not a necessarily good reason for repainting.

1. Check for dirt periodically; and assume it will be present in and near cooking areas (airborne cooking oil) and at all places at hand height.
2. Always initially clean the surface with a mild detergent with a sponge or soft cloth; resort to harsher cleaners only when necessary, recognizing that alkaline cleaners can dull the sheen or gloss of oil-based paint. Abrasive cleaners will burnish nearly any paint, and will dull the gloss of satin, semigloss and gloss products.
3. Washed surfaces should be rinsed thoroughly because residual cleaner can interfere with adhesion of paint applied later.

## B. Treating Mildew

Watch for growth of mildew on painted surfaces that tend to be moist; this includes laundry and basement areas, bathrooms and kitchens. Mildew should be treated and removed, and never simply painted over.

1. Apply a 3:1 mixture of water:household bleach to the mildewed area using a rag or sponge; wear eye and skin protection and a respirator; with colored paints, do a test area first to be sure the bleach solution will not cause fading; protect the floor and nearby articles
2. Allow the mixture to remain on for 20 minutes; add more as it dries
3. Rinse off the area thoroughly

## C. Blocking

Sometimes painted surfaces will stick to each other, as with a door and the door jamb. This is most likely if the painted surfaces are put back into service before the paint has fully dried. Dark color paints tend to “block” more than do light colors or white paints, all else being equal; and glossier paints block more than do flat paints. Warm and damp conditions increase tendency to block, and of course application of pressure increases blocking.

1. Always allow ample time for paint to dry before putting the painted object back into service.
2. If blocking is observed, rub talcum powder onto both surfaces – this will alleviate sticking
3. The plasticizer in gaskets used in windows, doors, etc. can soften latex paint and cause sticking. This is most problematic with new gaskets, and with dark-tinted paints. Steps to minimize this include: waiting several weeks to paint a new installation; using a light color or white paint; and applying talcum powder to the gasket and the paint.