

**THE  
RESENE  
EASY  
DECORATING  
GUIDE**



**RENOVATION: PAINT**



# ALL ABOUT PAINT

What type of paint to use and when  
– **Sharon Newey** explains

**PAINT IS A** landlord's friend. It's cheap, highly flexible in regards to colour and easy to apply. It has the ability to transform a rental property, or bits of it, quickly and simply. While most Kiwis know the basics about paint, here's a recap and a look at some of the new technologies in paint.

Only a few decades ago paint was mostly solventborne or oil-based, but as paint technology has improved, there has been a huge shift to using waterborne paints.

**Waterborne paints are generally:**

- Thinned and cleaned up with water.
- Lower in VOCs (volatile organic compounds) than solventborne paints, with less odour.
- Softer and more flexible so can cope better with movements in the substrate.
- Have faster drying times – touch dry in 30 minutes and can be recoated in two hours.
- Are generally more durable, with better mould resistance and more resistant to chalking.

**Solventborne paints are generally:**

- Thinned and cleaned up with other solvents, such as turps, so are messier to use.
- Are high in VOCs, high in odour, and are flammable.
- Harder so are easier to wipe, but will

become brittle as the paint ages.

- Easier to achieve a higher gloss level than waterborne equivalents.
- Excellent block resistance, ie, it won't stick to itself when two painted surfaces come into contact.
- More tolerant of adverse weather conditions (like humidity) during the drying period.

You can tell whether a paint is waterborne with a quick meths test. Clean the paint surface then using a rag with methylated spirits rub the paintwork. If the paint dissolves it is waterborne paint.

## WHAT GLOSS LEVEL SHOULD YOU USE?

**Gloss paints** have a highly reflective smooth surface and are easier to clean than paints with less surface smoothness. They are ideal for areas exposed to heavy traffic or heavy use, especially where fingerprints, grease or grime are common. Colours tinted into high gloss paints appear cleaner and more intense though they tend to highlight surface imperfections, however.

**Semi-gloss paints** have a slightly glossy appearance and have good stain resistance and are easy to clean. They are ideal for walls and woodwork that is subject to wear and on weatherboards and exterior cement surfaces.

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**Satin paints** tend to impart more warmth and depth to surfaces than flat paints. More stain resistant than flat paints, but less than semi-gloss and gloss paints.

**Low sheen** paints are the most popular finish for interior walls and an ideal choice where some sheen is desired and good cleaning properties are necessary. Outside, low sheen finishes are most commonly used over timber, concrete and plaster finishes.

**Flat paints** diffuse light, so they tend to conceal surface imperfections imperfections, making them a good choice for general use on walls and ceilings, especially those that are dented or rough. Colours appear muddied and darker in a flat finish than in a glossier finish. Flat finishes may trap dirt and make cleaning more difficult so best for areas that do not tend to get soiled, like ceilings.

### LIGHT REFLECTANCE VALUES

Dark, matt and/or textured surfaces absorb a lot of light and have low light reflectance values. Light, glossy and/or smooth surfaces reflect most of the light that falls on them and have high light reflectance values.

Light, colour and texture are inherently linked. If you change a room's colour from bright lime green to navy blue, the light reflectance of the room will decrease, making the room appear darker. Which is why many smaller homes look much more

spacious when painted lighter colours.

High reflectance light colours and glossy finishes are ideal for rooms you wish to appear larger, or use low light reflectance darker colours, heavier textures and matt finishes to make the room seem cosier.

Lighter, more reflective colours will generally last longer than darker colours because light colours reflect some of the sun's harmful energy while the dark colours absorb most of it. So to increase the life of your exterior paint choose a light colour. Similarly, if you are painting over unstable substrates, it is best to use a lighter colour and save the darker colour for accent areas.

### PRIMERS, UNDERCOATS AND SEALERS – WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

A **primer** is paint applied directly to the bare substrate. It is the first coat to be applied to the timber, steel or other surface to be coated. The primer is the most important coat of paint a substrate receives and will only be able to perform well if the surface preparation has been done well.

Primers have varying roles but are used to provide adhesion to the substrate for the new paint system or to protect the substrate until it can be top-coated. They stop moisture reaching the substrate and prevent subsequent coats of paint sinking into the substrate and losing gloss.

### UNDERCOATS ARE ALMOST OBSOLETE ON TIMBER AND GALVANISED STEEL

Special primers can help to prevent stains and tannins from bleeding through into the topcoats and ruining the finished job. Some primers have built-in fungicides to help prevent mould growth. They prevent corrosion of nail heads and prevent steel from rusting.

A **sealer** is used before, or in place of, a primer. Sealers are special primers used to provide good adhesion, recondition poor substrates such as crumbly old concrete tiles or seal off any surface porosity to prevent subsequent coats from sinking in, resulting in a non-uniform finish. They also block stains.

Unfortunately the naming of sealers and primers is very loose and often products labelled as primers would be more appropriately called sealers and vice versa.

An **undercoat** is applied over a sealer or primer and is designed to provide good adhesion to primer or sealer, provide a base that the topcoat will stick to, prevent moisture getting to the substrate and even out small imperfections in rough surfaces.

In these days of acrylic or waterborne paints, undercoats are almost obsolete on timber and galvanised steel. Instead of a special undercoat, the first of the two normal finishing coats of acrylic gloss can be considered as the undercoat.

Undercoats generally have the role of filling up surface imperfections and acting as barrier coats against moisture. Undercoats (and primers) will not weather well so should be top-coated as soon as possible.

Quality is an issue when buying paint. Cheap is not always best as cheaper paints may be thinner and not give good coverage. Two coats of a high-quality paint may be all you need, whereas you may need three coats of an inferior product. High-quality paints also have better pigmentation properties so that the colours will look better and richer. ■