

Safe, Smart, Solutions for Iowa



If you use or store your household chemicals improperly, they could end up in the wrong package.

Paint

Paint is a very common household product, much of it contains chemicals such as solvents and metals that can damage the environment, especially our water supplies, and human health if not disposed of properly. Paints and finishes are among the leading causes of indoor air pollution by releasing Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) during application and for years afterwards.

Picking the type of paint

Paint is generally classified into two groups, latex (also called water based) and oil-based (also called solvent-based). Latex uses water as the carrier for the pigments while oil-based paint uses a solvent

containing VOCs. As the paint dries, solvents evaporate leaving behind the solid coating. Because latex paints do not use solvents they emit far fewer VOCs and do not require the use of solvents to clean brushes and equipment, avoiding the use of additional hazardous materials.

How much paint to buy

Minimizing the amount of paint left over will save you from the trouble of storing or disposing of leftover paint. To determine the amount of paint you will need, first determine the square feet to be painted then divide by the number of square feet a gallon of paint will cover. For example, how much paint would be needed for two coats of paint for a

10 foot by 15 foot room with an 8 foot ceiling, one door and two windows?

- 1) Measure the total distance (perimeter) around the room
 $(10 \text{ ft} + 15 \text{ ft.}) \times 2 = 50 \text{ ft}$
- 2) Multiply the perimeter by the ceiling height to find the total wall area
 $50 \text{ ft.} \times 8 \text{ ft} = 400 \text{ sq. ft.}$
- 3) Subtract the square feet of the doors (usually 21 square feet) and the windows (ours are 15 square feet each)
 $400 \text{ sq. ft. (wall area)}$
 $-21 \text{ sq. ft. (doors, } 1 \times 21)$
 $-30 \text{ sq. ft. (windows, } 2 \times 15)$
 349 sq. ft.
- 4) Multiply that by the number of coats needed,
 $2 \times 349 \text{ ft. sq.} = 698 \text{ ft. sq.}$
- 5) Generally one gallon of paint will cover 400 square feet, however coverage is affected by the texture of the surface a quality of the paint.
 $698 \text{ ft. sq.} / 400 \text{ gal./ft. sq.} = 1.75$
gallons of paint

What to do with leftovers

You will probably want to save a small amount for touchups. Be sure to seal the container tightly and store where it will not freeze. Before deciding to dispose of your old paint check to see if it is still usable. If it is, see if you can find someone who could use it. Try checking with neighbors, theater groups or low income housing agencies. Some

Solid Waste Agencies operate a paint exchange program.

Completely dried paint can go in the trash. Be sure to leave the lid off so disposal workers will know the paint is dry.

Small amounts of latex paint can be dried out by simply removing the lid and allowing the liquid to evaporate. Larger quantities can be mixed with kitty litter or other absorbent material to speed up the drying process. Be sure to do this in a well-ventilated area, preferably outside, out of reach of children and pets. Once dry, it may be put in the trash.

Oil based paint, lead based paint, and paint that contains heavy metals or fungicides should be brought to a Regional Collection Center or Toxic Cleanup Day for proper disposal. Although lead based paint was phased out in 1979, you may still find a gallon or two lurking in your basement. Metallic and automotive paints often contain other heavy metals, so check the label. For a Regional Collection Center near you please visit our web site at www.safesmartolutions.org.

Paint thinners

Paint thinner can be reused by pouring it through a coffee filter to strain out the particles. Allow the filter to dry in a well-ventilated area (preferably out side) away from children and pets and dispose in the trash.

For more information please visit our web site at www.safesmartolutions.org



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