

## FEATURE STORY

# The power of paint

*Capitalize on color to transform a room*



Staff photo/Darcey Salwak

Choices abound when choosing a type and color of paint. These cans await at Manomet True Value in Plymouth.

**Text by Michelle McGlone**  
MPG Newspapers

Looking for a fast and easy way to change the entire look of a room? Instant gratification can be found in a bucket of paint. It's inexpensive, doesn't require a lot of fancy tools and nearly everyone is capable of doing it. And with a little homework, the average homeowner can produce professional results.

"Anyone can paint," said Craig Bardsley, general sales manager for Factory Paint and Decorating in Plymouth. "Nowadays, paints are so easy to work with, it's almost foolproof."

The hardest part of the process may be in deciphering the difference between finishes, sorting through the thousands of colors available, not to mention the hundreds of shades of one color, and determining whether to use latex or oil-based

paints.

Brushing up on the basics of 'painting 101' should help clear up the mysteries and have you well on your way to a new and improved room, thanks to a simple bucket of paint.

The type of paint you use and the finish you chose is very important. These make a difference in the way the paint looks, its durability and its maintenance. So before purchasing any paint, first know

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Bright colors, like the pink used on these walls (see cover photo), can make a statement when contrasted with white trim. Photo courtesy of Benjamin Moore.

the facts.

Latex and oil-based paints both have their pluses and minuses.

Latex, a water-based paint, is the most popular form of paint for ceilings and walls. It applies easily, dries fast (three to four hours to dry but allow three to four weeks to fully cure) and clean-up is a breeze, it just takes soap and water.

Oil-based paint, also called alkyd paint, goes on smoother and is more durable than latex. However, oil-based paints have a strong odor, take longer to dry and are cleaned up with paint thinner. Environmentally,

oil-based paints aren't the best choice, and have become less popular as people have become more concerned with the environment.

"I'd say oil-based paints are going to be extinct in another two years," Bardsley said. Taking its place may be the waterborne paints.

"Waterborne paints are very similar to the oil-based paints but are water-based," Bardsley said. "They are more durable and offer the hardest finish out there. It's the wave of the future and I'd recommend it over latex or oil-based paints."

Now that you know about the types

of paints available, next consider the level of sheen you're after. Keep in mind that the sheen level not only determines how dull or shiny your walls will be, but, depending which sheen you choose, can help hide flaws and make your walls easier to clean.

"If your walls are in bad shape, you'd want to use a flat paint, which doesn't show imperfections," Bardsley explained.

Then there's the eggshell or satin finish, which gives a "softer feel" and more gloss than flat, and it's also easier to clean. A semi-gloss finish is very shiny and durable and it's the easiest to clean. But it's not very forgiving if you aren't the neatest of painters.

"The glossier the finish, the more you're able to see any imperfections or painting mistakes," Bardsley said. The highest shine of all is the gloss, which shows any and all imperfections. This finish is typically reserved for trim work and doors; areas that don't require much coverage.

Now that you know the ins and outs of paints and finishes, it's time to pick a color. This can be easier said than done. There are thousands of different shades out there. Even for a basic white, there are many different choices.

"We have 150 colors in our off-white collection," said Doty Horn, Benjamin Moore's director of color and design out of the company's New York office. "The key is in matching the undertones to your environment. If you have pastel colors, you'll want to find a white with pastel undertones."

"I'd recommend you paint one section, then look at it in different lights and different times of day," said Peggy Kiley of Plymouth. In the past two years, this one-time novice painter has successfully painted nearly every room in her home. "Or get three or four paint chips, put them together and tape them on the wall. After looking at it for a while, you'll know if that's the color you

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want. Sometimes the color on the small paint chip doesn't look the same on your walls."

Benjamin Moore now has sample jars, which allows you to buy just a small amount of paint, try it out and determine if it's the color for you, before buying a gallon and painting all your walls. If you do make a mistake with color, never fret.

"The good thing about paint is that it can always be fixed," Kiley said. She learned this lesson when she chose a blue for a room. After painting the whole room, she came to the conclusion that she really didn't care for a blue room, but would rather have it in a taupe color. So, she simply painted it again.

To get an idea of what your entire room will look like in the colors you've picked, Benjamin Moore offers a Web site designed to help take the mystery out of the final out-

come.

"It's called the 'personal color viewer' and it's a great tool to use to see how your colors look together in a room," Horn said. To use this tool, click under the personal color viewer at benjaminmoore.com. It will allow you to play with the 3,500 colors Benjamin Moore has to offer, putting the colors up on room templates. You can see how colors you chose look together in an actual virtual room. However, to download this, you need to purchase the CD.

At Benjamin Moore, the colors are determined by four major trends – water, femininity, expressionism and stability. According to Horn, the company's most popular colors are found in the 'historical collection.'

"That's our top seller here in the United States," Horn said. "In the U.S., the neutral tones are more popular, whereas in Europe, the saturated (darker-toned) colors are more popular."

The brand of paint you chose is also important.

"Basically, you get what you pay for," Bardsley said. "It's well worth it to spend money for quality paint. It handles better, covers better and is more durable."

At Factory Paint and Decorating, a gallon of paint can cost anywhere from \$5 to \$25, and a gallon of paint covers about 400 square feet.

So, go ahead and splurge. It's worth it in the long run. Bardsley recommends Benjamin Moore paints, Muralo ("the BMW of paint") and Pratt and Lambert, which, according to Bardsley, Henry Ford used for his Ford Model T's.

Before doing any painting, it's very important to do proper prep work.

"I tell people to do their prep work one day, then paint the next," Bardsley said.

Here's what the prep work involves. First, you'll want to thoroughly clean your walls with a cleaner such as Spic-n-Span. Next, if you have nail holes, these will need to be covered (called spackling). After you've spackled the nail holes, sand them down. Finally, put up painters' tape (masking tape, if left on too long, is difficult to remove, said Bardsley), to protect the area you're not painting. Now, you're ready to paint.

The good news is not every wall needs to be primed, according to Bardsley.

"You'd want to prime your walls if you're doing a drastic color change or if your walls are in bad shape," Bardsley said. Otherwise, you're only two coats (typically) away from a freshly painted room.

Make sure to be well-prepared with all the right tools and equipment before you begin. Running out to the paint store, mid-painting, isn't an ideal situation.

You will need a roller, roller pan and cover (like the paint, you get what you pay for). There are different size covers to suit the types of walls you're painting. For instance, a heavy nap cover is best for cinder block walls: smooth walls can go with a 3/8 of an inch nap cover. A good brush is a must for painting corners and edges. An angled brush will be needed for "cutting in." Of course,



Dark green paint, with bright white crown molding and columns, makes this bedroom into a dramatic setting. Photo courtesy of Benjamin Moore.

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**"I'd recommend you paint one section, then look at it in different lights and different times of day. Or get three or four paint chips, put them together and tape them on the wall."**

— Peggy Kiley

you'll need paint. Then there's painters' tape and, finally, a drop cloth. All are needed for the job.

"Before you paint any walls, decide if you want the ceiling painted," Bardsley said. "If so, you'll want to paint the ceiling first. You always work from top to bottom."

Here's the proper sequence. Start at the ceilings, then move on to painting the walls, then the windows, door and lastly, the baseboards. Painting a white ceiling white can be tricky for even the most seasoned painter. Fortunately, there are products out there designed to help. It's a white ceiling paint that goes on blue, thanks to a special chemical, but dries white. This helps to apply the paint evenly.

As far as painting the walls, rollers are the quickest and offer an even finish. The proper way to apply paint with a roller is to paint a large M, then paint over it with a W, said Bardsley. This assures even coverage.

"Never try to roll to fast," Bardsley warned. "If you rush, it will show."

So how long should it take to paint a room? Bardsley said a 12-by-12 room, which would take no more than a gallon of paint, should take about three or four hours to complete.

Imagine, changing the entire look of a 12-by-12 room in less than four hours for about the cost of a family eating out at a nice restaurant. Now, that's not bad.



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