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CMHC

Priming your palace with paint

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Planning is key to ensuring a trouble-free project

Painting is a great way to give your home an inexpensive makeover and unleash your creative spirit at the same time.

Although once considered a necessary chore, painting today has become a popular and even enjoyable project for many homeowners. Both paints and painting techniques have come a long way over the years, and with the help of specialty brushes and rollers, do-it-yourselfers can achieve a very professional look.

The biggest decision for most people is choosing a colour. Generally, lighter colours open up a room and reflect more light. Darker, bolder colours can create a dramatic feel and are often perfect for larger spaces. Ask the experts at your local paint or home improvement store for advice on colour, as well as the appropriate paint type and finish for your project.

There are two main types of paint: water-based (or latex) and oil-based (or alkyd). Keep in mind that some alkyd or solvent-based paints emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs) as the solvent evaporates after painting. Once the paint has completely dried and formed a tough skin, the emission levels drop, but some paints can emit odours at low levels for a long time. There are some paints on the market that are solvent- and VOC-free. Look for the key words "Low VOC" or, better yet, "No VOC" on the label.

To estimate how much paint you will need, measure the height and width of each wall to be painted, then multiply to obtain the square footage. For rooms with lots of windows and doors, deduct the square footage of the windows and doors. Typically, a 4-litre (1 gallon) pail of paint will cover about 37 square metres (400 square feet).

PREP TIME IS KEY

Preparation is the most important and most time consuming part of painting. However, consider it time well spent, because the better you prepare before you start, the easier the actual paint job will be.

Start by assessing the surface that requires painting and taking care of any needed repairs.

Walls should be washed with mild detergent and water. If there are grease marks on the walls or if someone in the household smokes, you may need to clean first with

TSP (tri-sodium phosphate) and rinse well with clean water. If you do use TSP, you should wear rubber gloves and eye protection.

Before you begin, be sure you have the right tools for the job. Most household paint jobs require a paint tray or two, rollers, brushes, masking or painter's tape, a ladder and an extension pole. You'll also need to protect your furniture and floors with drop sheets and you will want to wear old clothing and shoes.

Whether you decide to paint one room or your entire house, proper planning, the right tools and your imagination will help your paint project run smoothly.

To help you with your paint project, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has a free About your House fact sheet entitled Painting: Walls, Ceilings and Floors. To order your copy visit us online at www.cmhc.ca or call our toll free number 1-800-668-2642.

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