

4-6-18 Crazy Math, Sane Method

Whenever I do some house painting, I think of Yogi Berra's often quoted description of baseball; that it is ninety percent mental and fifty percent physical. I like his math and I understand it, too, even if I don't play baseball. I paint. And spring time is a great time to do it!

First, there is the gearing up mentally for the job. Do I have all the supplies. How shall I prepare the surfaces? Do they need cleaning, sanding or de-glossing? The answer is always yes to that question. Am I prepared for protecting the floor and quick clean-ups of drips and those unintended strokes and bumps onto the ceiling when we are painting the wall? If we are truly ready to begin, then we have accomplished the ninety percent mental exercise for painting and we haven't even started yet.

Now, begins the more commonly understood aspect of painting. It is ninety percent preparation, even though it is one hundred percent physical. Before The Day We Actually Paint, we might have had to do some serious preparation in terms of bleaching mildew spots, rinsing, drying, sanding and patching. Then, on another, much anticipated day, We Can Finally Begin, sort of. We spread the papers, drop the cloths, wipe clean the surfaces, sand the surfaces, patch the holes, sand the patches, sweep and vacuum, tape the edges and maybe apply a little soap to the window panes (for easy scrape/clean later) and we Open The Windows.

Then there is the planning. Where shall we begin? Shall we begin with the top of the wall, using an edger pad or feather it in? Then we can edge the windows, baseboards and paint the corners. Use a quality roller. Never be tempted to use foam. It leaves tiny bubbles. (Nice in Champagne; not nice on walls.) Evenly coat the correct type of roller (for smooth or textured surface) with paint and apply it to the wall in the shape of a "W" or double W. Then, roll up and down and sideways, finishing with feather light strokes from bottom to top to remove any roller marks. Move on to the next section.

If the color does not look like what you expected, as it so often does not, look at it again when dry and plan on a second coat, no matter what the can says. If it still does not look right, consider what colors are next to it. If you just painted the wall, consider the trim. Colors change because of how our eyes receive them and perceive them. If you loved that purple paint on the chip or in the magazine picture, and your trim is wood, then the color of the wood has changed the way your eyes see the purple wall. Consider a neutral color for the trim. There are only three neutrals: black, white and silver. Everything else must be coordinated by the artist's color wheel. Learn from others how colors look in various combinations. Paint departments have free paint chips. Bring home several of each color and place them next to the trim, both near windows and at interior spots. Look at them at different times of the day, for they will look different in differing lights.

With a fan on to disperse the fumes, you can now step back to admire the fruits of your labor. It is so rewarding to see the transformation! Then, just as you are considering calling friends to see the results, your pride and satisfaction wane as you look at everything that needs picking up and cleaning up.

The edging tape comes off cleanly if you use a razor at the corner (and if it was name brand tape, specifying how long it can stay on without peeling paint off). The newspapers and cloths fold up quickly. The tools and paint cans are put away easily.

What to do with those brushes and edging pads, though? It might be tempting to put it off, but you might as well throw them away if you are not going to wash them properly.

Speaking of throwing away your money, you don't want to ruin your septic system by washing paint off in your household sinks, do you? That's right. Even latex paint will eventually separate from the water and turn to the plastic that it really is. And won't it do just as nice a job of coating the pipes and filter and sand in your on-site septic system, as it did your walls? (Yes.) Please don't let that happen. And don't even think about solvents or oil paint! Don't get me started on murdering good bacteria! You wouldn't drink the paints, now, would you?

As soon as you are done with the brushes and pads, wipe off as much paint as you can with paper towels. Wipe again with a soapy paper towel. Then soak and swish the brushes in a bucket of soapy water. After a little while, dump that soapy paint-water outdoors. If you live in close quarters where you think that won't fly, let that bucket be a settling tub. (Let it sit for a couple days and you will see the paint settle to the bottom and you can pour off the water. The paint will dry to plastic and can be thrown away.) Rinse and dump several times, scraping down your nice paint brushes with an old scrubbing brush (within the soaking bucket).

After a few of those soak-scrub-rinses, it can be safely washed in your sink with soap and water. Rinse and squeeze. Rinse and squeeze. Pat dry. Wrap the paintbrush in a paper towel, while keeping all the bristles flat and smooth and then fold over the paper towel so that it looks like the cardboard wrapper it came in. Now your brush will be good as new the next time you use it. And your toilet will continue to flush! It sounds like crazy math but it all adds up.

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