

03-13-09 Crazy Math, Sane Method

Take The Time to Do It Right

Doing The Math.

90% Mental 50% Physical

Spring Fever Sprucing Up

Quality Painting Quality Clean Up

Preserving the Value of Our Home and Our Septic System

Maintaining What's in Sight and Out of Sight

Whenever I do some house painting, I think of Yogi Berra's often quoted description of baseball; that it is ninety percent mental and the other half is physical. I like his math and I understand it, too, even if I don't play baseball. I paint.

First of all, there is the gearing up mentally for the job. Do I have all the supplies? Am I really sure I have all the supplies? Am I prepared to handle distractions or, perhaps even, ignore distractions? 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 really ready to begin, then we have accomplished the ninety percent mental exercise and the fifty percent physical preparedness 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. Previous to 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, 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? 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, for instance, consider the trim. Colors actually change as a result 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 really only three neutrals: black, white and silver. Everything else has to be coordinated by the artist's color wheel.

Learn from others how colors look in various combinations. Most paint departments have those combos in free samples.

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.

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! 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 it, now, would you?

As soon as you are done with the brushes and pads, soak them in 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, create a settling tub with something like five gallon buckets. **Let that bucket 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 with an old scrubbing brush (within the small soaking can/bucket). After a few of those soak-scrub-rinses, it can safely be 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 crazy but it all adds up.

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