

TIPS for Minimizing Paint Waste

Many people find that properly managing paint waste is a hassle – so the cans keep accumulating. If you face this problem, try to: minimize the amount of leftover paint by knowing your coverage requirements ahead of time and buying only what you need, and correctly store your leftover paint so that it can be reused.

Buying the Right Amount of Paint

By purchasing only what you need, you will *save money* and *reduce the clutter* in your home or storage area.

Before going to the store, take a minute to quickly estimate how much paint you need. Just answer these few easy questions:

- How many coats of paint do I want to apply?
- For interior rooms, what are the floor dimensions and ceiling height?
- For exterior siding, what is the approximate wall height and width for each side of the structure?

Use these estimates to calculate the square footage of the entire area.

Generally, one gallon of paint covers 400 square feet with one coat; however, dry porous wall material might require more. So for example, if you estimate that you have a total of 400 square feet of wall space and you want to apply 2 coats of paint, you should buy 2 gallons of paint.

For a more accurate estimate, consider the number of windows and doors in the structure. Ask the store clerks for help, or check out:

- Benjamin Moore's paint calculator for interior rooms: www.benjaminmoore.com/en-us/for-your-home/paint-calculator.
- Lowes' paint calculator for interior and exterior jobs: www.lowes.com/cd_Paint+Calculator_953562246.

What NOT to Do with Leftover Latex Paint

Liquid latex paint that is thrown away in the trash or is poured down the drain can be released to the environment and cause contamination.

DO NOT:

- Throw containers with even small amounts of liquid latex paint in the trash
- Pour leftover paint down the drain or sewer

Other Tips for Paint Purchasing

If you are trying a new color, test it out at home by purchasing a 4-ounce sample size. Then if you don't like how it looks, you won't have a whole gallon (or more) that you can't use.

Stores mix paint colors using standard formulas, so it is easy to buy more at a later date if necessary. Professional painters recommend having 1-quart of paint left over for touch-ups.

Look for recycled content paint, which is priced significantly lower than virgin paint and has the same quality. By using recycled content paint, you are preventing it from being landfilled and saving the resources needed to manufacture new paint.



Storing Leftover Paint So It Can Be Reused

In order for leftover paint to be useable at a later date, it needs to be stored so it doesn't have contact with air or go through a freeze/thaw cycle more than once or twice. Follow a few simple steps to keep leftover paint fresh and reusable:

- Do not store in unheated garages, attics, or outside storage sheds – these areas may experience freezing temperatures.
- Some suggest that you cover the opened can with plastic wrap before securely placing the lid back on, then store the can upside down.

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What To Do With Leftover Latex Paint In

When you have leftover latex paint that you don't want anymore – check it out to see if it is in reusable condition. If it is, donate it! If not, make sure to dispose of it properly.

Donate Good Quality Paint

Many non-profit organizations accept donations of latex paint in good condition. Examples include community theater groups, religious organizations, and charities. Local public works departments, schools and colleges, and public housing authorities are other potential options.

Local Organizations that Accept Good Leftover Latex Paint:

Check with these organizations to make sure they are still accepting paint and to identify any requirements.

Local Materials Exchange Websites:

How Can I Tell If I Have Latex or Oil Paint?

Latex paint represents more than 80 percent of the paint sold to consumers. These terms on the label, identify the paint as latex: water-based, acrylic, vinyl acrylic, terpolymer, and styrene acrylic.

Oil-based paints include varnishes, paint thinners, and other solvent-based coatings. If the label contains any of the following terms, the paint is hazardous: combustible, oil, alkyd, petroleum distillates, mineral spirits, linseed oil, hydrocarbons, lacquer, thinner, lead, chromium, and/or cadmium.

Note: If there isn't a readable label, you should dispose of the paint as a hazardous waste.

How Can I Tell If My Paint Is Usable?

To keep leftover latex paint fresh and reusable, it cannot have contact with air or go through a freeze/thaw cycle more than once or twice. To know whether the paint you have has gone bad, look for these signs:

- Mold
- Strong rancid odor – a chemical odor is a good sign
- The solvent has separated from the solids and doesn't mix
- There are clumps in the paint that don't stir out
- Inconsistent color (after being stirred)
- Rusted or damaged cans

Make Sure to Properly Dispose of Unusable Latex Paint

If all else fails, make sure to properly dispose of your leftover latex paint. It is against the law to dispose of liquid latex paint. Before placing it in the trash:

- Open the container and allow the paint to air dry in a well-ventilated area away from children and pets, or
- Add kitty litter, sawdust, sand, or clay absorbent to soak up the leftover paint.

NEVER place oil-based paints in the regular trash. Even hardened or dried oil-based paint is flammable and should only be disposed of through household hazardous waste (HHW) collection programs.

Participate in a Paint Exchange

Community paint exchanges, also called "Drop & Swaps", allow residents to bring their leftover reusable latex paint to a designated location where others can pick it up for their use. We are fortunate to have one in our area.

Participate in a Paint Exchange – Latex Only

Name of Facility / Program	Location & Contact Info	Hours of Operation

Local Household Hazardous Waste Collection

Name of Facility / Program	Location & Contact Info	Hours of Operation	Paint Accepted (and Pricing, if Applicable)

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