

TIPS TO HELP YOUR PAINT BRUSH LAST LONGER

Buying More Brush Time

some of the new low-VOC latex paints dry fast, the brush gets stiff in a few minutes. To buy extra time, I'll add a small amount of latex conditioner to the paint, just enough to keep the brush from dragging.

Cleaning Out Latex Paints

Clean a synthetic brush as soon as the latex paint creeps up near the ferrule. Put some water in a 5-gallon bucket and swish the brush around to get the bulk of the paint out. Then, for the paint that's collected deep in the filaments, run them upside down under a faucet to make sure you get it all out. When the water runs clear, brush the filaments with a metal brush comb, which straightens the bristles and coaxes out any bits of dried paint. You can also use an old hair comb. Mechanical brush spinners are a great way to get excess water out of big, 4-inch flat brushes. Then store the brushes in a plastic zipper bag, or in their original packaging.

Cleaning Out Oil Paints

First, place the brush in an old jar, where the bristle tips soak in paint thinner without touching the bottom; this way they won't sit in pigment and become bent. Hang the brushes from a length of coat-hanger wire above the jar. If you need a brush the next day, soak it overnight, then comb it out and get back to work. If you're putting it away for a while, still soak it overnight, then comb it, and dip it in a jar of clean solvent. After a quick flick to get rid of excess solvent, wipe it dry on a newspaper or a rag. If you see any paint, dip it again in clean thinner, then flick and wipe again.

Keep the jar tightly sealed. When the paint settles, pour the thinner into another jar. Never toss out solvent: It's wasteful, bad for the environment, and illegal besides.

Whether you're using a brush or a roller, the rules for applying paint are the same: Keep a wet edge, lay a thin coat and use nice, long strokes.

If you have any questions, please contact Jack Dever directly at jackdever@sbcglobal.net.