

8 Home Painting Hacks That Will Change Your Life

By [Rena Behar](#) | Apr 27, 2017

Of all the DIY projects you might tackle during your days as a homeowner, painting a room seems like the easiest. After all, people let their kids do it, right?

But [painting a room](#) isn't as simple as picking your favorite color and slapping it on the wall. In fact, there's plenty of [potential for mistakes](#) when you're painting your home. And while we can't move your furniture, or stop you from disagreeing with your partner over [Raspberry Truffle](#) versus [Moroccan Red](#) in the dining room, we *can* offer some tips to take some of the pain out of painting.

It all starts with some objects that are probably already lying around your house. Next time you break out the paintbrushes and trays, implement some of these handy hacks that will help you avoid much of the stress—and mess!—of painting.

1. Use rubber bands to prevent drips

A brilliant paint job—free of clumps and unwanted "texture"—starts with getting just the right amount of paint on your brush. This ridiculously simple trick can help: Wrap a rubber band vertically around your paint can so that it bisects the opening, then use that to swipe off the excess paint.

"You don't want to scrape it against the can's opening, because the paint will seep into the seal, making it harder to close," says **Ray Wheeler**, owner of [The Paint Manager](#). "The rubber band will also just drip the excess paint back into the can, limiting your waste of paint."

2. Plastic bags make the perfect tray liner

They've been languishing under your sink long enough—it's time to put them to work.

"Cleaning a paint tray is often enough to stop someone wanting to start a home improvement task such as painting," says **Kyle Gesuelli**, a home improvement expert at [Handy](#), a platform for connecting clients with household services professionals. "Avoid the extra stress (and mess) by lining your tray with a garbage bag before adding the paint. When done, remove the tray from the bag and it will still be as good as new."

Alex Levin, another home improvement expert at Handy, suggests another use for the plastic bag: When you need to take a break, just wrap a plastic bag around your brush and secure it with one of the rubber bands you still have on hand. This will keep the paint on your brush from drying out and hardening.

If you've gone green and have no plastic, use aluminum foil, which will also do the trick as a tray and brush liner.

3. Kill odors with vanilla or essential oils

If only paint colors truly smelled like their names. A bite of [Vanilla Cookie](#), anyone? Or perhaps a whiff of [Silver Peony](#)? Thanks, but we'll pass.

It's not paint makers' fault that the colors we adore are also ... noxious. But it turns out, they don't always have to be.

You can avoid the pervasive paint odor by adding your favorite essential oil to the paint can.

Judi Kieffer, president of [Kieffer Design Group](#), recommends 1 teaspoon per gallon of paint or one 15-milliliter bottle for a 5-gallon bucket. The odor won't linger, so you can use your favorite smells or consider matching them to the vibe you'd like the room to have (e.g., citrus oil for energy, lavender oil for peace and serenity). If you're more baker than bohemian, vanilla extract will also do the job.

4. Blend paint colors of the same shade

"Many times 1 gallon can vary ever so slightly with the other, and no one wants a wall to show streaks or shade variation," Kieffer says.

Once you've used about two-thirds of one can, blend it with your next can to create a more even tone. This way you won't spend the next year squinting at your walls, wondering if that slight color change is really there.

5. Protect your surfaces with aluminum foil or petroleum jelly

It might seem hard to believe when all your walls are stark white and bare, but there are some parts of your house that just don't need to be painted. But you don't have to invest in rolls and rolls of painter's tape to avoid drip stains. Simply wrap your doorknobs and other fixtures in tin foil. It will wrap more closely and accurately, without needing adhesive.

For those fixtures that tinfoil just can't cover, you can use petroleum jelly.

"Yes, painter's tape works great, but it is hard to apply to places with ridges or bumps like some windowsills," Wheeler says. "Just run some petroleum jelly over those crevices or places."

You can even use Post-it notes if you're deep into your project and can't make a supply run, but be careful of movement around the edges.

6. Use a putty knife for accurate lines

If you'd still rather use tape, accurate application is key.

“There is nothing worse than removing what you believed to be a strip of perfectly applied masking tape, only to realize that paint has still managed to bleed out onto the protected area,” Levin says. “The best way to apply masking tape is by pressing it onto the surfaces that you want to protect using a putty knife or any other similar object that you have on hand.”

7. Splurge on canvas dropcloths

You might not already have these lurking in your storage bins, but canvas dropcloths are worth the investment.

“Plastic dropcloths might be cheaper, but they aren’t worth a dime when they come up under your feet, making you feel secure until you find the drops of paint on your carpet later,” Wheeler says.

Canvas dropcloths are better because the canvas will also absorb paint, bend around corners, and avoid becoming slippery, Gesuelli says.

“It’s reusable and reliable—which is what you want,” Wheeler adds.

8. Clean brushes with fabric softener

Did you forget to wrap your brush with that plastic bag when you took a break? If so, you might have come back a few hours (or days) later to a crusty, hard mess.

Don’t throw away those brushes just yet. Just combine 2 tablespoons of fabric softener with warm water, and then soak your brushes in the mixture overnight, Wheeler says. A good scrub the next day should make your brushes as good as new.