

Painting Over Graffiti

If a large portion of a property has been vandalized, it may be cheaper to simply repaint. It will also give you the opportunity to possibly change paints to a glossy enamel which will resist future graffiti attacks better than a flat finish. For added protection, having an extra gallon of the same type of paint will help ensure a quick and perfect match if graffiti returns.

Before painting, try to clean the surface of any dirt or grease. Certain marker pens and permanent markers have the ability to absorb paint pigments. That is what makes them permanent so use a special paint called a stain blocker. Also, if the base colour is light and the graffiti a dark colour, use a stain blocker first. This special type of paint prevents the darker paint from seeping through the fresh paint.

Oil or Latex paint?

Oil base paint is tougher than latex. Latex is less expensive and easier to clean up. Though not recommended, oil base can be applied at below freezing temperatures if needed. Oil base takes longer to dry, but can be used if light rain threatens.

Sealers and Foam Brushes

Once the new paint is on, you might consider using a “sealer” or “protectant”. These types of products seal the small surface pores and prevent graffiti’s ability to adhere.

Once sealed, new graffiti is less work to remove. Some protectant systems sacrifice a small amount of the sealer and need to be reapplied after the graffiti is removed. As a good insurance policy, buy some foam-type brushes. If graffiti reappears, use the foam brushes so that the new paint will blend into the old with perfect results.

Tips for Removal

Brick, Cement, Concrete

Use extra strength paint remover. Apply with a wire brush to work into holes and pores of stone. Allow time to activate and rinse with a forceful stream of water from a hose. Use of a pressure washer or soda-blaster maybe needed. If the surface is uniformly flat, a light grit (60) sand paper can remove paint, but will also scratch the surface. Consider using a sealer after removal to close pores and make future removal easier.

Stucco

Due to the multi-faceted surface of stucco, it is impossible to sand off graffiti. Use paint remover and follow up with a high pressure water hose or better yet a pressure washer. Use stucco paint and go over the graffiti carefully. Consider using a sealer as a finish coat.

Aluminum/Vinyl Siding

Aluminum siding is usually coated or painted. Vinyl siding is made of plastic which can be marred by lacquer thinner-type cleaners. Solvents may work too aggressively and remove the coating as well. Experiment in a small inconspicuous area first and then tackle the more visible areas. Use paint remover sparingly and carefully. Use a clean rag and keep turning to a clean part of the rag before each wipe. The longer the solvent stays on the surface, the deeper it penetrates. In most cases, you will probably have to repaint.

Information featured in this brochure is to be used as a guide only. Before using any product to remove graffiti, consult with your local paint store or professional graffiti removal contractor. Always be careful and follow the manufacturer’s directions when using any graffiti removal product. Some products may be toxic and will require rubber gloves and masks to be used.

Tips For Removal

Glass or Plexiglas

Any razor blade can scrape away cured paint on regular glass. For other marks solvents can be used. Use the clean rag technique and hold the rag over the graffiti for a moment to let the solvent work. On Plexiglas be careful of the lacquer thinner type solvents as they can attack the surface causing it to fog and smear. Make sure your product is compatible with the type of surface you are cleaning. Rinse thoroughly with water.

Wood

Most thinners will remove magic markers and acetone will often remove day old spray paint. You must use a clean rag and keep using a fresh part on each wipe. On latex or oil-based paint use a stain-blocker primer for exterior use. After the stain blocker coat has dried, you can proceed with regular paint, oil or latex. Most oil base paints are more durable to solvents and hence could make future clean up easier. Consider a sealer coat after final finish. Avoid using flat paints as they readily absorb pigments from markers and spray paint.

Metal

On any unpainted metal (iron or stainless steel) surface, any solvent can be used, Some polished aluminum surfaces will cloud or oxidize with aggressive cleaners like lacquer thinner. Use the clean rag technique. If you are unsuccessful, try paint remover.

Source: City of Milwaukee, “How to Wipe out Graffiti”