

Make most of new paint job with proper prep and products

By JAMES AND MORRIS CAREY

The Associated Press

Few home improvement projects are as instantly gratifying as is a fresh coat of paint. It can, in a matter of hours, transform a dark and dingy space into a bright and cheerful one.

There are other benefits. A fresh coat of high-quality paint is more washable and, thus, easier to keep clean. And, in the case of an exterior job, high-quality paint acts to protect siding, trim and other painted finishes from weather damage.

Painting can be one of most user-friendly of do-it-yourself projects. Armed with high-quality paint, the proper applicators, ample time and a bit of practice, you'll get impressive results. As are many home improvement projects, painting can be therapeutic and enjoyable. Yet, a painting project could become a nightmare. There are steps that that will ensure success.

An important part of a good paint job is preparation — making sure that the surface is clean and free of chipped and flaking paint. Damaged areas should be patched, sanded and primed. Masking and protection is another factor that can yield professional results. Use blue painter's tape and plastic or canvas drop cloths to prevent paint from making contact with areas not intended to be painted.

What most influences the quality of a paint job is the quality of the paint, the type of paint, and the applicators — brushes, rollers, etc.

There are two basic types of paint that can be used for interior and exterior house-painting — oil-base (alkyd) and water-base (latex). All paint, oil or water, consists of three basic ingredients that greatly influence its quality and use. They are pigments and fillers, liquids or "carriers," and binders. Pigment and fillers are for hiding and color. According to chemists, they consist of organic colors, inorganic colors and extenders such as clay. This is really where the "rubber meets the road" when it comes to paint quality. Fillers typically consist of titanium dioxide or clay. Better-quality paints contain more titanium dioxide and less clay. Titanium dioxide gives the paint better "hide." Titanium dioxide also is a substantially more costly ingredient than clay. Thus, if you're looking for one-coat coverage, look for paint that contains more titanium dioxide and less clay.

Unfortunately, you won't be able to determine quality by the label. There are, however, three means to determine quality — name brand, price and touch. Start by selecting a respected name brand and plan to spend about \$20 to \$25 per gallon. A trick to determine paint quality is the touch test. Have a gallon of the paint mechanically shaken. Have the paint salesperson remove the lid. Stick your thumb and index finger into the paint and rub them together. If the paint feels smooth and silky it is good quality. If it feels gritty, it has high clay content and you can count on more than one-coat coverage.

ing upon what's being painted. We recommend oil-base primers and finish coats for interior doors and trim (windows, doors, crown, base) because it offers a hard abrasion-resistant surface that easily can be cleaned. Oil is also an excellent primer for raw metal rain gutters, ornamental iron fencing and furniture and bare wood. Use a paintbrush made of natural bristles for the best results when using oil-base paint.

Latex is the best choice for interior walls and ceilings and exterior siding and trim (wood or stucco). Most do-it-yourselfers prefer water-base paints because they are easy to use, and cleanup can be done with soap and water. In addition, latex paints dry quicker than oils and don't have the pungent odor that is common with oil-base paints.

Whereas in the past we have exclusively recommended an oil-base primer and finish coat for "wet" areas such as kitchens, baths and laundries, today's high-quality, 100-percent acrylic latex paints — especially those with higher sheen or gloss — are exceptional at resisting moisture, dirt and stains. And they stand up, even after repeated washing or scrubbing.

Thanks to advances in latex technology, latex paints go on smoother; brush and roller marks are barely noticeable. According to paint experts, the latest top-quality acrylic latex paints also have a longer "wet-edge time" than do older counterparts. This tendency to dry more slowly makes it easier to blend one section of paint into another, which can be especially important when working over a large and/or complex area.

Tip: If your painting project will take more than a day, wrap your roller cover or paint brush in plastic food wrap and place it in the fridge overnight. Remove it the next morning, remove the plastic wrap, let it reach room temperature and continue where you left off.

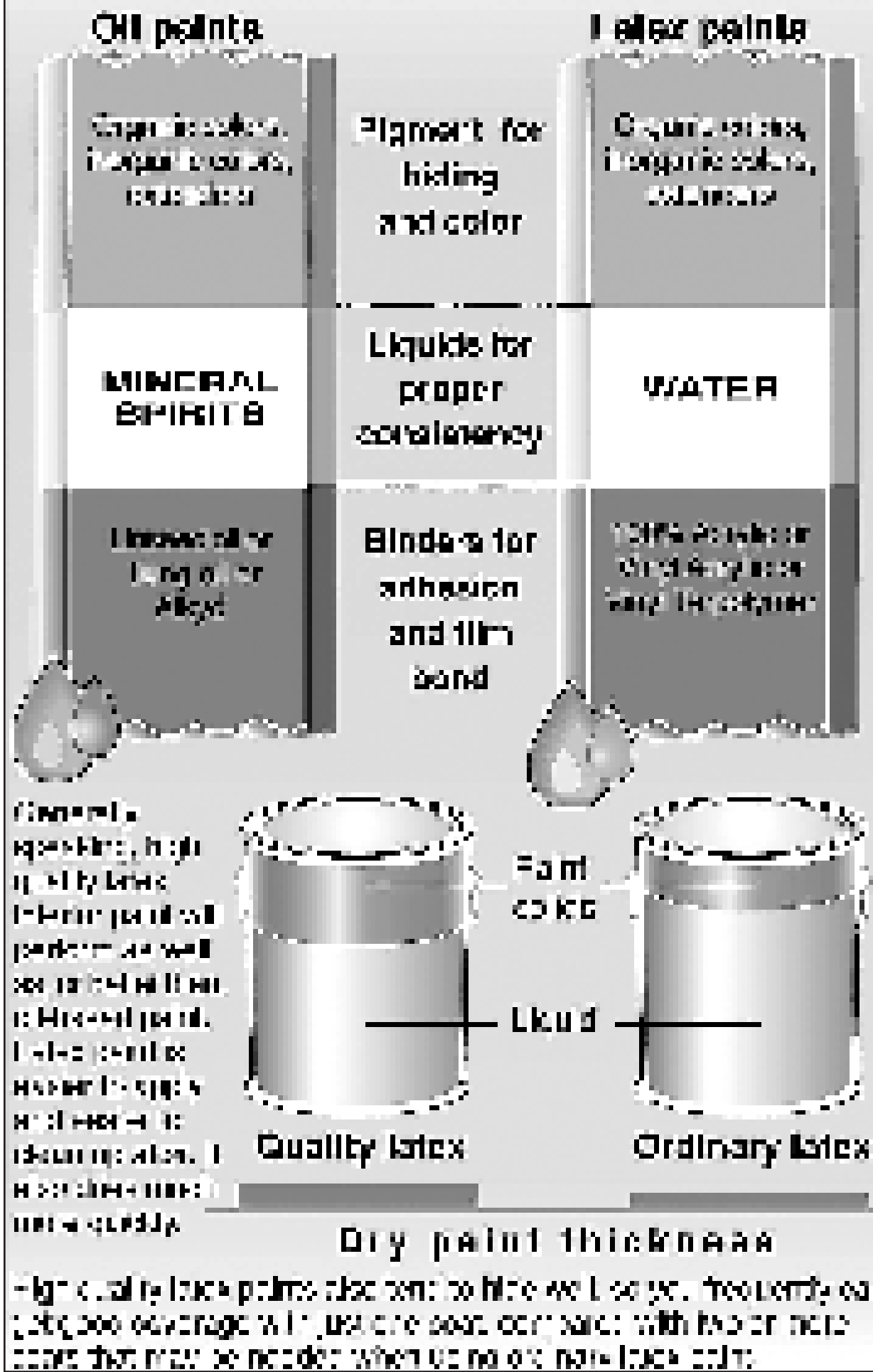
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The second ingredient in paint is the liquid or solvent. It gives the paint proper consistency and acts as a "carrier" for the binders and pigments. Its purpose has been fully served once it has completely evaporated. In oil-base paints the solvent is mineral spirits. Water is the solvent in latex or water-base paints. Most do-it-yourselfers prefer water-base latex paints because they are particularly easy to work with and offer soap and water cleanup.

Mineral spirits must be used for cleanup when using oil-base paint. Binders are the final ingredient in paint. Binders are used for adhesion and film bond. Linseed oil, tung oil or alkyd resins are the primary binders for oil-base paints. One-hundred percent acrylic or vinyl acrylic are the binders for water-base paint. Better quality paints also contain mildew inhibitors and ingredients that minimize running and splattering.

Now that you know to look for high-quality paint, should you use oil or latex? It might be appropriate for you to use both, depend-

Comparison of oil and latex paint



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