



MASONRY:

A Solid Base For Building Your Business

If you're looking to build your business, take a good, solid look at masonry.

It's one of the most common materials used in the exteriors of residential, light commercial and commercial buildings. Yet, there are many homeowners and building managers who are unaware that masonry, despite its rock-hard appearance, can be painted with excellent results. Or they're under the impression that if paint is applied, it will chip, peel or otherwise deteriorate rapidly.

If you're going to pursue this market successfully, you first need to educate your customers that they do not have to "live with" the original color or appearance of their masonry if they don't want to. To help you accomplish this, we've included a special tear-out page at the end of this article to use with prospects. You'll also find some selling tips in the "Smart Marketing" column on page 17.

Once you've made the sale, the success of a masonry paint job will then depend greatly on surface preparation and your choice of coating. And, to help you in these areas, we've provided some tips below.

SURFACE PREPARATION

Masonry exteriors can all be successfully painted, as long as you take certain precautions when preparing the surfaces. Before painting masonry, it is important to ensure that the surface is sound, free of dirt, powdery dust and loose sand, yet rough enough to allow good adhesion of the coating.

Thoroughly clean weathered masonry with a wire brush, power brush or power washer to remove all dirt, unbound sand, chalk or loose surface particles. If any mildew is present, treat it with a mixture of one part bleach and three parts water prior to the cleaning process.

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Efflorescence, a white, sometimes crusty or powdery material, may also be present. If allowed to remain, this salty deposit can interfere with paint adhesion and ruin the appearance of the job. Remove efflorescence by power washing, wire brushing, scraping or, if necessary, re-profiling. If possible, identify the source of the moisture behind the substrate that is causing the efflorescence and eliminate it. When power washing, use plain water and take care not to force water into cracks or loose mortar joints.

After removal of all dirt, mildew and efflorescence, thoroughly rinse the surface to eliminate any residual particles, dust or chemical solutions. Undercut any cracks and seal them with an acrylic or siliconized acrylic caulk.

UNPAINTED MASONRY

If the masonry has not been painted before, it may be extremely porous. Rather than use large amounts of paint filling in surface pores, start with a quality water-based or solvent-based masonry sealer. This will provide a smoother, less porous surface on which to paint. An exterior latex primer recommended for masonry can also serve this purpose.

New masonry should cure for at least 30 days (ideally one year) before painting. However, if unable to wait for this to happen, take these two points into account:

- 1) Do not apply alkyd or vinyl acrylic latex paints directly to bare masonry that is less than a year old without first applying an alkaline-resistant primer or sealer. Otherwise the high degree of alkalinity of the masonry may attack the paint, prematurely ruining film integrity and fading the color.
- 2) 100% acrylic latex paints are far more resistant to alkaline attack than alkyd and vinyl acrylic latex paints, and can be applied to fresh masonry after only 30 days without the use of a sealer, if necessary. To be safe, however, application of a sealer is always a good idea if the masonry is less than a year old.

PREVIOUSLY PAINTED MASONRY

If the masonry has been previously painted, use wire brushing to remove all powdery dust, dirt, peeling paint and other loose material, and then rinse it with clean water. If the surface is extremely dirty, light re-profiling may be necessary. Remove any mildew or efflorescence as described earlier. Power washing is an effective approach as well, but use care not to force water into porous sections, cracks or mortar joints.

In a repaint situation, use a primer where old paint has been removed during surface preparation or through weathering, or if the surface is very porous or uneven in porosity. Priming the entire job will improve the overall adhesion and uniformity of appearance of the finish coat.

The guidelines above are common to all masonry surfaces. Described below are additional concerns when painting stucco, EIFS, brick and concrete.

STUCCO

In the case of new stucco, a recent trend in construction practices has resulted in problems due to painting highly alkaline stucco prematurely with inadequate paint systems. The trend relates to the waiting period prior to painting.