



Paint Finishes

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You may think the toughest thing about choosing the paint for your next renovation or new home is selecting the colour. But what about choosing the best type of paint to improve the indoor air quality of your home? If you want to use paints which help create an environmentally friendly home inside with minimal environmental impacts outside, it's time to think about paints which produce no or low off gassing and contain low VOC levels.

They're not new, but often people don't think about the real benefits till after they have bought a paint that "smells" or one that needs mineral turpentine to get off your hands. So what should you think about when choosing a GreenSmart paint option in your favourite colour?

What is low VOC?

Conventional paints contain Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), which are petroleum-based solvents that evaporate from paint films while the paint is drying. These compounds are the unpleasant solvent fumes that may trigger respiratory reactions including asthma and breathing discomfort, when using conventional paints. They also contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.

Traditional oil based paints (also known as alkyd enamels) have a solvent level of approximately 50% or more. This means that for every four-litre can of enamel, two litres go straight into the atmosphere, compounding the "Greenhouse Effect". Conventional water-borne paints have a solvent level of around 7%, so obviously using water-borne paints is a far more environmentally responsible option.

Additives classified as VOCs are included to achieve some of the positive attributes of paint, such as good coverage, easy application and washability. The challenge for manufacturers, is delivering the quality of paint finish customers have come to expect, whilst reducing the overall environmental impact of each tin.

Natural paint options

If you want to avoid VOCs altogether, there is an ever increasing choice of natural paints and stains to choose from. Natural paints are made from ingredients other than petro-chemicals. They are usually made from entirely plant and mineral based products.

They can be as durable as VOC paints and provide an alternative for people with higher sensitivity to chemical fumes. These paints also have less impact on the environment during manufacture, use and disposal.

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