

Exterior Home Painting Tips

If you're thinking about painting the exterior of your home yourself, your first decision shouldn't concern the color or sheen of the paint but, rather, who's going to do the painting. Deciding whether to hire a contractor or do the work yourself has implications for your social calendar, your peace of mind and your pocketbook.

1. Do you have enough time to do the job? Repainting a home can take a full week or two. For many people, that translates into a lot of vacation days or weekends. Are you willing to make the sacrifice?
2. Do you have the patience to do the job correctly? While painting can be fun and psychologically rewarding, good surface preparation — essential to any successful paint job — can be tedious. Will you really take time to properly prepare the surface before yielding to the urge to paint? (Consider renting power-washing equipment to speed surface preparation.)
3. Can you afford to hire a contractor? By doing the job yourself, you can save a lot of money, however, having your home professionally painted will be faster and eliminates the need for you to buy equipment, prepare the surface, and do the actual painting.
4. Do you have the proper equipment? The highest quality acrylic latex paint costs more than \$20 per gallon, but it takes more than paint and elbow grease to do the best job. You'll also need ladders, scrapers, sandpaper, brushes or rollers and safety equipment. Do you have these items? Are you willing to invest in them?
5. Are you in good health and reasonably fit? Achieving professional-looking painting results is within the skill level of most do-it-yourselfers, but if you are out of shape, you may find the work somewhat taxing.
6. Do you enjoy physical work? From a psychological standpoint, many home owners get enormous satisfaction from completing a home improvement project. Along with the cost savings, this is one of the rewards that go to those who do their own painting.
7. Have you done exterior painting before? As with most home improvement projects, painting is easier “the second time around,” after you've mastered surface preparation and application techniques.
8. Are you afraid of heights? Look to the highest point of your house. Would you be nervous painting it from a ladder? If so, proceed to your telephone directory and check the listing for “Painting Contractors.”

If you ultimately decide to do your own exterior painting, proceed with confidence. Exterior painting is one of the top do-it-yourself projects (trailing only interior painting). Many home owners go it alone and get great results. Whatever you decide here are a couple tips: Make sure the surface is properly prepared, and spend a few extra dollars for the best quality exterior paint. Properly-applied top quality acrylic latex paint can last up to ten years or more — so it will be a long time before you have to make this decision again.