

# Graffiti

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## **GRAFFITI IS NOT ART—IT IS A CRIME!**

The unauthorized application of graffiti to public or private property is a criminal act; it defaces the urban landscape. The graffiti seen in our neighborhoods isn't merely an eyesore, it is a signal to residents, business owners, and police that the area will decay unless the problem is brought under control.

## **PREVENT**

- **ONGOING UPKEEP**

Keep your property clean and neat. The appearance of neglect attracts vandals.

- **PROMPTLY REMOVE GRAFFITI**

- Data shows that removal within 24-48 hours significantly reduces the chance of reoccurrence Use graffiti resistant materials or coatings on chronically "tagged" wall.

- **CONTROL ACCESS AND THRU TRAFFIC**

Incorporate shrubs, thorny plants, and vines to restrict vandal access.

Use fences, controlled entrance and exists, rails, and other barriers.

Limit access to roofs by moving dumpsters away from walls and covering drainpipes.

- **STEP UP SECURITY**

Add or improve lighting for natural surveillance.

Install a security camera.

Organize a "Neighborhood/Business Watch."

## **REPORT**

- **NOTIFY THE AUTHORITIES**

If you see graffiti, please contact the property maintenance department at 271-4630 with the location. If you have been vandalized and the graffiti is on your property, please report it to the police department at 271-4777. It is the duty of every property owner to keep their property clear of graffiti at all times.

- Call 911 to report graffiti **in progress.**

## **REMOVE**

- There are various products and methods to remove graffiti. Your local paint store can help with appropriate product selection. Paint-over is the cheapest and simplest for a large area. **Wear protective gear** when using solvents.

***PREVENT***

***REPORT***

***REMOVE***

# Graffiti Removal Techniques



## ***Painting Over Graffiti***

If a large portion of a property has been vandalized, it may be cheaper to simply repaint. A \$10 gallon of paint covers the average 100 sq. ft. garage door for an average cost of .10 a sq. ft. 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, an extra gallon of the same type of paint will help ensure a quick and painless perfect match if graffiti returns.

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

***Oil or Latex paint? Sealers? Foam brushes?*** - Oil base paint is tougher than latex. Latex is cheaper 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. Once the new paint is on, you might consider using a "sealer" or "protectorant." These types of products seal the small surface pores and prevent graffiti's ability to adhere. Once sealed, the new graffiti is easier to remove with less work. Some protectorant systems sacrifice a small amount of the sealer and need to be reapplied after the graffiti is removed.

## ***Identify Type of Surface:***

### **BRICK, CEMENT, CONCRETE:**

Use extra strength paint remover, graffiti remover or Peel Away. 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 a pressure washer or soda-blaster may be 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.

Products: Procon, Blaster

### **STUCCO:**

Due to the multi-faceted surface of stucco, it is impossible to sand off. Use paint remover or Peel Away 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.

Products: Off, Procon

### **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. Peel Away may work better on certain types of vinyl.

Products: Off, Procon

### **Wood:**

Try working up the solvent list if the marks are new. Most thinners will remove magic markers and acetone will 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-killing primer for exterior use. After the primer or stain blocker coat has dried, you can proceed with regular paints, 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.

Products: See the thinner list, Off, Procon, Kilz II

### **FIBERGLASS:**

Depending on the type of graffiti, work your way through the thinner list. Beware that acetone – based solvents will soften plastics. Use paint remover full strength and rinse carefully. Try Peel Away in an inconspicuous place first to assure it will not mar the surface.

Products: See thinner list, Off, Procon

### **GLASS OR PLEXIGLASS:**

On regular glass, any razor blade can scrape away cured paint. For other marks, any solvent can be used. Use the clean rag technique and hold the rag over the graffiti for a moment to let the solvent work. On plexiglass, 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.

Products: See thinner list

### **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.

Products: See thinner list

**SEE FOLLOWING PAGE FOR  
PRODUCTS MENTIONED AND THINNER LIST**

# Thinners List and Mentioned Products



## THINNER LIST

- **Turpentine**—has more solvency than mineral spirits. Even though turpentine is less toxic than petroleum based solvents, it can cause an allergic reaction in some individuals.
- **Mineral Spirits**— petroleum based and a substitute for turpentine. Most painters prefer it as a paint thinner because it costs less, is not so sticky and has a less offensive odor than turpentine.

Turpentine and mineral spirits are good first-try cleaners, although turpentine can remove paint that has hardened slightly. Mineral spirits will dissolve only fresh paint.

- **Naphtha**— a petroleum based solvent similar to mineral spirits but with a great volatility. It is used mainly as a paint thinner or as a cleaning agent. Naphtha is a more powerful solvent than mineral spirits, so less is needed to dissolve the same amount of paint. Naphtha is highly flammable. When using it, work in a well ventilated area and wear rubber gloves and a respiratory mask. Good on crayons.

Alcohol is sold in many forms: isopropyl, methyl, wood, ethyl, and denatured alcohol.

- **Isopropyl alcohol**— is the familiar rubbing alcohol formulated for external medication. It is also useful for removing resinous stains and for removing the gummy tar residue such as in shoe polish and magic markers.
- **Denatured alcohol**—used for thinning shellac and for cleaning brushes used to apply shellac. It can be used to remove light pencil marks on wood. It can be used to clean certain permanent markers.
- **Lacquer thinner**—can soften and dissolve most paints even after they have hardened. It is highly effective at removing spray paint. However, it can soften underlying paint and many plastics and vinyls.
- **Acetone**— it is the recommended thinner for polyester resins and fiberglass. It will melt plastic vinyl.

Acetone and lacquer thinner are useful for removing paint and varnish, but they will soften and dissolve many plastics like plexiglass. Do not use a nylon brush for applying these solvents because the acetone may attack the bristles. Booth acetone and lacquer thinner are highly flammable, and both release toxic fumes, so avoid inhaling them as much as possible.

- **Methylene chloride**—is the principal ingredient in most paint removers and in heavy-duty brush cleaners. Sometimes it is combined with other ingredients and sold as “graffiti remover.” It is effective in removing all finishes, but it, too, attacks and softens plastics. It can be hard on human skin, so wear rubber gloves when working with this solvent.

*If you know the type of graffiti (crayon, spray paint, magic marker) go right to the type of solvent you need. Otherwise, work your way up the solvent list and see what works.*

*Technique is as important as the right solvent. You must use a CLEAN low nap rag and keep using a clean part of the rag with each wipe. Otherwise, as the graffiti softens, you will just end up smearing it around.*

## PRODUCTS MENTIONED

- KILZ II** A primer coating used to prevent bleeding through a new paint.
- PROCON** Comes in quarts or gallons; can be wiped on with a rag and hosed off.
- GOOF OFF** Comes in a spray can; spray on and wipe off with a rag.
- BLASTER** A type of remover like Procon, Good Off and Peel Away that can be used with a pressure washer if the area is porous or a very large job.

*Consult your local paint store for professional advice and clarifications on the pros and cons of graffiti removal techniques.*