



## RECOMMENDED LEVELS OF PAINT FINISH OVER GYPSUM BOARD

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### 1. SCOPE

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This document describes and recommends various levels of paint finish as the final decoration over new interior gypsum board surfaces. The recommended level of paint finish over gypsum board wall and ceiling surfaces varies depending on their location in the structure, the type of paint applied, the level of gypsum board finish achieved prior to final decoration, and the type of illumination striking the surface. Each recommended level of finish is described with typical applications. All materials are to be used in accordance with all codes, specifications, and manufacturers recommendations.

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### 2. TERMINOLOGY

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The following definitions are applicable to this document.

**back-roll (v):** Rolling a spray painted surface with a paint roller immediately following spray application.

**coat (n):** Paint varnish or lacquer applied to a surface in a single application (one layer) to form a properly distributed film when dry. – **ASTM**

**critical lighting (adj):** A condition whereby interior surfaces are flooded by natural or artificial lighting at an oblique angle; such as lighting from large expanses of windows, glass curtain walls, skylights, or surface-mounted light fixtures. - **ASTM**

**gloss (adj):** A subjective term used to describe the relative amount and nature of mirror like (specular) reflection. - **ACA**

**joint photographing (n):** The shadowing of the finished joint areas through the surface decoration. Syn telegraphing. - **GA-214**

**paint (n):** Any pigmented liquid, liquefiable, or mastic composition designed for application to a substrate as a thin layer which is converted to an opaque solid film after application. Used for protection, decoration or identification, or to serve some functional purpose, such as filling or concealing surface irregularities. – **ACA**

**primer (n):** First complete coat of paint applied in a painting system to an uncoated surface prior to application of an intermediate coat or topcoat. Note: A primer used in gypsum board construction is typically a paint material specifically formulated to fill the pores and minimize suction differences between gypsum-board surface paper, texture and/or the compound used on finished joints, angles, fastener heads, accessories, and over skim coatings.

**properly painted surface (n):** A surface that is uniform in appearance, color, and sheen. It is one that is free of foreign material, lumps, skins, runs, sags, holidays, misses, strike-through, or insufficient coverage. It is a surface that is free of drips, spatters, spills, or overspray which a contractor's workforce may cause. Compliance to meeting the criteria of a "Properly painted surface" shall be determined when viewed without magnification at a distance of five feet or more under normal lighting conditions and from a normal viewing position. Note: A surface uniform in



appearance, color, and sheen may not be achieved with a coat of primer or a single coat of topcoat. - **PDCA**

**topcoat (n):** The finish coat(s) of a coating system, formulated for appearance and/or environmental resistance. - **PDCA**

**wallcovering (n):** Any type of paper, vinyl, fabric, or specialty material that is pasted onto a wall or ceiling in a wide array of colors, patterns, textures, and performance characteristics, such as washability and abrasion resistance. - **ACA**

**wallcovering primer (n):** Coatings formulated to seal the porosity of new drywall, joint compounds, and most surfaces; also formulated to promote adhesion and serviceability under wallcovering products.

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### 3. LEVELS OF PAINT FINISH OVER GYPSUM BOARD

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#### Level 1:

a. When final decoration is undetermined, all appropriately prepared gypsum board surfaces shall have one coat of drywall primer applied. Drywall primer shall be applied to the mil film thickness and application conditions specified by the primer manufacturer.

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b. When wallcoverings are to be applied, all appropriately prepared gypsum board surfaces shall have one coat of wallcovering primer applied. Wallcovering primer shall be applied to the mil film thickness and application conditions specified by the primer manufacturer.

#### Level 2:

All appropriately prepared gypsum board surfaces shall have one coat of topcoat material applied to yield a uniform surface. Paint shall be applied to the mil film thickness and application conditions specified by the paint manufacturer. (The painted surface may not achieve uniform appearance, color, or sheen, but shall be absent of defects caused by the painting contractor's workforce.)

*Recommended where economy is of primary concern.*

#### Level 3:

All appropriately prepared gypsum board surfaces shall have two separate coats of topcoat material applied to yield a properly painted surface. Paint shall be applied to the mil film thickness and application conditions specified by the paint manufacturer.

*Typically recommended for areas having textures (spray or hand applied) over a primed gypsum board surface and the area is not subject to critical lighting. Refer to Drywall Finishing Council document titled, "Recommended Specification For Preparation of Gypsum Board Surfaces Prior To Texture Application".*

*When subjected to critical lighting, a Level 5 gypsum board finish as defined in GA-214 is recommended.*

#### Level 4:

All appropriately prepared gypsum board surfaces shall have one coat of drywall primer applied to yield a properly painted surface and one separate coat of topcoat material applied to yield a properly painted surface over the drywall primer. Paint shall be applied to the mil film thickness and application conditions specified by the paint manufacturer.



*Typically recommended for smooth surfaces not subject to critical lighting and areas having light to medium texture finishes (spray or hand applied over a primed gypsum board surface). Refer to Drywall Finishing Council document titled "Recommended Specification For Preparation of Gypsum Board Surfaces Prior To Texture Application".*

*When subjected to critical lighting, a Level 5 gypsum board finish as defined in GA-214 is recommended.*

## **Level 5:**

All appropriately prepared gypsum board surfaces shall have one coat of drywall primer applied to yield a properly painted surface. Two separate coats of topcoat material shall be applied over the drywall primer to yield a properly painted surface. Paint shall be applied to the mil film thickness and application conditions specified by the paint manufacturer.

*This level is recommended where the best paint finish is required, such as under critical-lighting conditions or when paints that have a glossy surface are used. Recommended with a level 5 gypsum board finish is the most effective method to minimize joint and fastener photographing and provides the most uniform final finish.*

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## **4. COMMENTS**

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**Application.** Industry experience demonstrates that an effective method for achieving a visually uniform surface for both the primer and topcoat is spray application immediately followed by back rolling or roller application using good roller techniques, such as finishing in one direction and using roller types and naps recommended by the paint manufacturer.

**Environmental Conditions.** Follow the Drywall Finishing Council's document titled, "Interior Job Condition Specifications for The Application of Drywall Joint Compounds, Drywall Textures, and Paint/Coatings".

**Gypsum-Board Preparation.** To achieve the desired level of paint finish over gypsum wallboard, the substrate must be finished appropriately. Refer to Gypsum Association GA-214 titled "Recommended Levels of Finish for Gypsum Board, Glass Mat and Fiber-Reinforced Gypsum Panels".

**Job Standard Specification.** To improve communication, a job standard of the approved paint system shall be established to provide for a visual sample, constructed and finished in accordance with applicable project specifications. As a guideline, refer to PDCA P5 titled "Benchmark Sample Procedures for Paint and Other Coating Systems" for a detailed description.

**Paint Selection.** Manufacturers produce various paint grades and types. When the level of finish is selected, consult with the paint suppliers to determine the products that will produce the desired finish.

**Texture.** Texture, as referred to in Level 3, is a dimensional effect that becomes an integral part of the properly primed substrate. Note: Topcoat materials used as a texture shall be referred to the appropriate level of paint finish.



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## 5. RESOURCES

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**ACA.** *Coatings Encyclopedic Dictionary.* American Coatings Association, [www.paint.org](http://www.paint.org)

**ASTM C 840,** Standard Specifications for Application and Finishing of Gypsum Board. ASTM International, [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org)

**GA-214,** Recommended Levels of Finish for Gypsum Board, Glass Mat and Fiber-Reinforced Gypsum Panels. Gypsum Association, [www.gypsum.org](http://www.gypsum.org)

**PDCA, Standard P1,** Touch-Up Painting and Damage Repair - Financial Responsibility. Painting and Decorating Contractors of America. [www.pdca.org](http://www.pdca.org)

**PDCA, Standard P4,** Responsibilities for Inspection and Acceptance of Surface Prior to Painting and Decorating. Paint and Decorating Contractors of America. [www.pdca.org](http://www.pdca.org)

**PDCA, Standard P5,** Benchmark Sample Procedures for Paint and Other Coating Systems, Painting and Decorating Contractors of America. [www.pdca.org](http://www.pdca.org)

**PDCA Glossary of Terms,** Painting and Decorating Contractors of America. [www.pdca.org](http://www.pdca.org)

**DWFC,** Recommended Specification for Preparations of Gypsum Board Surfaces Prior To Texture Application, Drywall Finishing Council, Incorporated. [www.dwfc.org](http://www.dwfc.org)

**DWFC,** Interior Job Condition Specifications For The Application of Drywall Joint Compounds, Drywall Textures, and Paint/Coatings". Drywall Finishing Council, Incorporated. [www.dwfc.org](http://www.dwfc.org)

**DWFC,** Method for Inspecting Joint Treated Gypsum Panel Surfaces, Drywall Finishing Council, Incorporated. [www.dwfc.org](http://www.dwfc.org)

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