



Removing paint



Difficulty



Experience/Time

Novice: 60 min.

Experienced: 35 min.

Pro: 20 min.

Removing old paint can be challenging, however there are several options available to help make the process easier and safer. Chemical strippers are solvents that come in either liquid or paste and work by softening the old finish so that it can be easily removed. They are great for complex shapes such as moldings and many brands have low odors and clean up with water.

Heat guns are also a great way to remove old paint, varnish and other finishes. They are especially good at taking off multiple layers of paint all at once. The heat gun softens the paint causing it to bubble up making it easy to remove with a metal scraper.

What you will need

Tools:

- Disposable brush
- Paint scrapers
- Abrasive scouring pads
- Soft cloth
- Eye protection
- Chemical-resistant gloves
- Heat gun
- 4-inch wide putty knife

Materials:

- Chemical stripper
- Denatured alcohol or mineral spirits

Preparation:

- Paint removal can be a messy process, so make sure you protect the area around where you're working with a drop cloth.
- Even when used under ideal conditions, chemical paint removers and heat guns may not remove every last bit of paint, varnish, or stain, so plan to also spend some time sanding your project.

Safety:

- **WARNING!** If you scrape, sand or remove old paint, you may release lead dust. **LEAD IS TOXIC. EXPOSURE TO LEAD DUST CAN CAUSE SERIOUS ILLNESS ESPECIALLY IN CHILDREN. PREGNANT WOMEN SHOULD ALSO AVOID EXPOSURE.**
- Scraping, sanding or removal of lead paint may also be subject to Federal, State, and local regulations. Consult your local building authority and visit www.epa.gov/lead for more information.
- Always use caution with a heat gun, don't point it at anything other than the work surface. As a precaution, keep a fire extinguisher handy when using a heat gun
- Always wear appropriate safety gear, long sleeves, eye protection and a respirator designed for use with a heat gun or chemical strippers.

Savings:

- Painting your windows yourself instead of hiring a professional saves money.
- Investing in quality paint will ensure a more durable and lasting finish.



Removing paint using chemical stripper

Steps

Steps 1-3 of 4

Step One



Pour a small amount of the stripper into a convenient glass or metal container, and apply it as specified on the label. It's best to start at the top of your project, and work your way down. Take the time to work it into hard-to-reach places.

Step Two



Sprinkle a light coating of sawdust over the stripper just before you remove it. The sawdust thickens the stripper, making it easier to remove.

Step Three



Reapply the stripper to detailed or problem areas, and use specialty scrapers to remove the softened material. Use light pressure on the scrapers to keep from tearing or gouging the wood. If you can't find a contoured scraper, use the corner of a putty knife.

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Removing paint using chemical stripper

Steps

Steps 4 of 4

Step Four



Scrub the entire project with nylon brushes or abrasive pads to remove all traces of the old finish and the stripper sludge.

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Removing paint using a heat gun

Steps

Steps 1-3 of 4

Step One



With the heat gun running, point the nozzle at the work surface, keeping it about 2 inches away. Move the gun back and forth across the surface until the paint begins to bubble and blister. Stop if the finish begins to smoke!

Step Two



Hold the putty knife at about a 30-degree angle and, use it like a plow to push the paint away. Avoid gouging the wood. Dump the softened paint sludge into an old coffee can as you work. Special paint scrapers with angled blades work better than most ordinary scrapers.

Step Three



You'll want to go back over detailed areas with the heat gun, using a contoured scraper to get into narrow crevices.

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Removing paint using a heat gun

Steps

Steps 4 of 4

Step Four



Any stubborn flecks that remain can usually be removed by using just the scraper. Again, be careful not to damage the work surface. When the paint is all gone, wash the surface with denatured alcohol or mineral spirits.

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