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**Faux Painting Finishes**

**By Kathleen Wilson**

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Faux and Decorative Painting  
Sponge painting

Sponge painting is great because it is easy, fast, requires little paint and materials, and did I mention it was easy? It can be used on walls, furniture, and accessories, and can give instant facelift to dull objects.

Don't let anyone convince you that you have to go buy an expensive sea sponge to do this. I've used plastic grocery bags, cloth diapers, even old clothing...(Ok, now it's called ragging, same technique, more subtle look.) But you can use a plain old kitchen sponge, and here's the secret....tear away all the hard edges of the sponge, even tear chunks from the center to give it an irregular appearance.

Now choose your paint, and sponge! Remember to sponge sparingly at first, you can always add more later. Also, dab the paint off on your plate first, you only need a little paint on the sponge, or it will be too gloppy. Practice first on a paper bag, and remember to change the direction of your hand occasionally, the idea is not to get a pattern going.

Try combining sponge painting with stenciling or decorative painting, tape off a border and use it just there, you can even sponge paint over glassware with the new glass paints available at your craft store.

**Marbelizing**

There is a very simple technique to marbleizing that is popular in the home decorating world today, and you won't believe how easy it is until you try it.

Simply choose two to four colors of paint within the same color scheme, one light, one medium, one dark.

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Using a regular paintbrush, dip the brush into all the colors. Now simply pounce the paintbrush over the surface to get a mottled effect. It might help to keep a picture of a piece of marble nearby to refer to. Use the different colors to add shading, or tone down an area you think is too bright.

When finished with the surface, take a small artists liner brush, dip it into either the lightest or darkest color you used, (thin with a little water, if necessary) and paint veins by dragging the brush over the surface, wiggling it as you go. Don't go overboard on the veining. Remember also to bring the veins over the edges for a realistic finish.

I think sealing it with a gloss clearcoat or polyurethane gives the most authentic look of polished marble.

### Crackling

Crackling is very popular as aged finishes have become so much a part of showcasing warmth and

history in our homes. It can be done without purchasing expensive crackling kits.

Crackled finishes are a simple chemical reaction. All you need are two colors of latex paint, one a base coat that will peek through, and one a top coat, that you will see the most of, and household glue.

That's right, direct from your kid's art box.

Sand and prime your piece if necessary, then paint with your base coat. Remember, this will be the color the will just peek through, so it's best if it contrasts with the top coat. Let dry.

Now mix household glue with equal parts water, and brush onto your base coat. This can be done easiest with a foam brush. Allow the glue to dry until just tacky, about 30 minutes.

Now for the reaction part. Brush on your top coat directly over the glue coat. Don't brush over any one area more than once, you will ruin the crackle effect in that area. You should start seeing the crackling take place within a minute or so. The size of the crackles has a lot to do with your technique in applying the top coat, so experiment a little first. Long, smooth strokes tend to produce larger more dramatic cracks than short strokes, and

if you really want a subtle effect, try sponging or ragging on the final coat. Allow to dry overnight.

If you wish to further antique your work, simply dab or brush it with some wood stain, then wipe off.

Repeat until you get the look desired.

You can seal with polyurethane or clearcoat, or coat it with common furniture wax.

Kathleen Wilson is the Editor of a free ezine called The Budget Decorator, dedicated to the "budget impaired" home decorator. Visit her at <http://www.thebudgetdecorator.com> for more free projects and ideas, and for info on her workshop.

## **Decorative And Faux Painting Is Fun But Don't Start Until You Read This**

### **By Dorrie Ruplinger**

I think decorative and faux painting techniques look great, are fun to do, and add a personal statement to a room. I've been adding my personal look to the walls in my homes ever since my husband and I purchased our first "fixer-upper."

## Faux Painting Finishes

When I first starting using faux and decorative painting techniques on the walls in our home it was a financially motivated action. We didn't have a lot of extra money. I couldn't afford new furniture or flooring for a room but I could afford to buy some paint. But just painting the walls a solid color seemed boring to me so I started exploring faux and decorative painting. It didn't take me long to get hooked. Why do I like faux and decorative painting on walls so much?

1) It's an inexpensive way to change the look of an entire room. Paint is the most economical way to change the look of a room. 2) A painting technique on the walls minimizes and hides cosmetic flaws such as surface cracks and less than perfect patching jobs.

3) It's easy to change when you're sick of it. Repainting a room that has paint on the walls is a whole lot easier and much less time consuming than stripping wallpaper off walls and preparing those walls for paint.

4) It adds your own personal look and style to a space. Color and texture are fun and interesting. An entire home painted the same off-white color is dull and boring to me. A faux painting technique can evoke any mood you want in a room whether it's a Tuscan look, retro 70's look, a country look, something elegant, a cheery bright look for a child's room, or any other look you want.

5) The choices of techniques and paints are nearly endless. Some of the more popular technique choices include: sponging, ragging, dragging, color washing, stenciling, crackling (

), marbling, gilding, wood-graining,

spattering, feather-dusting, and stippling. You could also use one of the specialty paint products on the market today such as Venetian plaster to create the look you want or buy a faux painting kit such as a Woolie painting kit to help make your project as fun and easy as possible.

While I highly recommend faux or decorative painting, there are a few things I've learned since I've started faux painting that I'd like to share with you. Some of these items are things to "not do" that I've learned the hard way. Others are tips and suggestions that were helpful to me.

1) Go to your local paint store or decorative painting store and look at the samples they have. For example, Home Depot has lots of different booklets and paint chips with faux paint finishes on them for you to look at and even take home to look at in your lighting. That pretty metallic finish on a paint chip in the store make look garish when you get it home and look at it in your home's natural lighting.

2) Consider taking a class before doing your first project. Some paint stores and home improvement stores, such as Home Depot, offer free faux painting clinics and workshops. You can also find some very good faux painting classes for a reasonable fee by looking in your local paper or doing an Internet search.

3) Practice your technique on a piece of scrap wallboard before doing it on your wall. This is especially important if you are blending colors. A few years ago my son wanted his bedroom painted. He wanted me to use a Woolie (a great faux painting tool available at most paint supply stores) to blend together a

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burgundy and a caramel color. Each color looked great by itself, but when they got blended together too much a dark fuchsia color emerged. And anything resembling pink was not something my son wanted on his wall!

Because I had been faux painting for years I didn't listen to my own advice about trying the technique on a piece of scrap board first nor did I buy sample sizes of paint to try out. I bought gallons because I wanted to save time. Luckily the store agreed to exchange the paint for me free of charge but we did have to paint over a wall and wait for it to dry before starting over with new colors.

4) Remember that the texture of your walls will dictate, to some extent, what faux painting techniques you can and cannot use. If your walls are smooth you can do just about any technique you want. But textured walls are very common, especially in newer homes. You may see striped walls in a brochure or on a sample wall and decide that's what you want to do in your home; but if your walls are textured it's going to be nearly impossible to achieve straight lines for your stripes. Keep in mind that faux finishes on paint chips from a store are done on a smooth surface. They will look a little different (but may still look very nice) if you do that same technique with the same colors on a textured wall.

5) If you're going to do a faux technique in an entire room don't start on the wall that people will first look at when they walk into the room. That means don't start on the wall directly across from the doorway. Unless you're a professional, it takes a little while for you to get your technique perfected in a room. Put that less than perfect start in the least noticeable part of the room.

6) If you get tired while painting and need a break, don't stop in the middle of a wall. Stop at a corner. If you stop in the middle of the wall and don't come back to work on the project again until after the paint is dry, you're going to have a noticeable line on the wall. It won't be pretty.

7) Think twice about mixing your own color with paint you have at home unless you are absolutely positive you're going to have enough paint to do the entire job. If you mix your own color and run out of paint before you finish it will be time-consuming and challenging to match that color. You might be able to match it because many paint stores have specialty machines that can match a paint chip you take in, but if you've mixed together two different sheens of paint (for example let's say you mixed a flat paint and a satin paint together) you're going to have a hard time reproducing that same sheen. In some cases it may not be noticeable; but in other cases it will.

If you're a beginner, start with an easy paint technique. Sponging is very easy and looks great. Another favorite of mine is the Woolie I mentioned earlier. There are a couple of different types. I like the Woolie roller best. It's really easy to use and the results are fantastic. It comes with a short video. Watch it before you start painting. If you're not going to watch the video before you buy your paint, there's one important thing to remember. Buy paint colors that are at least two places away from each other on a paint strip. For example, if you pick out a paint strip with 5 yellows on it, don't buy two colors that are right next to each other because they will be so close in color that you won't see much variation when you put those colors on the wall and start to blend them.

Dorrie Ruplinger is a featured writer for

. For more information

on decorative painting and faux painting visit



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