

ConsumerReports®

# HOME

YOUR  
NEW

SPECIAL ISSUE | FEBRUARY 2015

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## TAKE CARE

If you sand or scrape paint from a house built before 1978, be warned: Older coats of paint might contain lead, so you'll need to take extra precautions. In fact, federal law now requires that painters you hire be certified by the Environmental Protection Agency and trained in lead-safe work practices.

## TOP PICKS FROM CONSUMER REPORTS

# Exterior Paint

Manufacturers tend to reformulate exterior paints and stains often, partly to meet tougher federal standards limiting volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which can cause headaches and dizziness, and are linked to pollution, smog, and respiratory problems.

In our tests, we simulated conditions to see how exterior paints would look after three, six, and nine years. (The last time frame is about how long most homeowners go between paint jobs.) Most paints held up well for the equivalent of at least three years, and the best still looked fine after nine.



## More Picks From Consumer Reports

SHERWIN-WILLIAMS	ACE	GLIDDEN	GLIDDEN	BEHR
DURATION	ROYAL	SPRED	PREMIUM	PREMIUM
FLAT	EXTERIORS	FLAT	FLAT	PLUS
\$67	FLAT	\$25	\$22	\$29
	\$26			

### CONSUMER REPORTS' TOP-RATED FLAT EXTERIOR PAINT

#### BEHR PREMIUM PLUS ULTRA FLAT ENAMEL (HOME DEPOT)

\$37 (per gal.)

This self-priming paint boasted impressive appearance after the equivalent of nine years outdoors, plus resistance to cracking, color change, dirt, and mildew. It's well below the federal VOC limits.

[homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com)

### HIGH-PERFORMING OPTION WHEN MILDEW'S NOT A CONCERN

#### BENJAMIN MOORE AURA FLAT

\$68 (per gal.)

This self-priming paint still looked very good after the equivalent of nine years outdoors, and excellent after three and six years. It resisted cracking, color change, and dirt, but not mildew. VOCs are well below the federal limit.

[benjaminmoore.com](http://benjaminmoore.com)

### SMART CHOICE FOR FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS

#### CALIFORNIA PAINTS FRES-COAT VELVET FLAT

\$44 (per gal.)

This flat paint still looked excellent after the equivalent of six years in our tests. It proved particularly adept at fending off dirt, cracks, and color change, but not mildew.

[californiapaints.com](http://californiapaints.com)



## More Picks From Consumer Reports

**ACE**  
ROYAL  
EXTERIORS  
SATIN  
\$28

**GLIDDEN**  
PREMIUM  
SATIN  
\$25

**GLIDDEN**  
SPRED  
SATIN  
\$27

**VALSPAR**  
DURAMAX  
SATIN  
\$39

**CALIFORNIA**  
PAINTS  
FRES-COAT  
SATIN GLOSS  
\$48

CONSUMER REPORTS' TOP-RATED  
SATIN EXTERIOR PAINT**BEHR PREMIUM PLUS SATIN ENAMEL**  
(HOME DEPOT)

\$31 (per gal.)

High points include resistance to cracking, color change, dirt, and mildew. With a claimed 100 grams per liter of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), it's also well below the federal limit.

[homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com)LONG-LASTING CHOICE  
WORTH THE SPLURGE**SHERWIN-WILLIAMS DURATION SATIN**

\$68 (per gal.)

This satin comes with a high price, but its built-in primer could save you money and time. It's one of two satins that looked excellent after the equivalent of six years in our grueling tests, which accelerate wear. After nine years, it still looked very good.

[sherwin-williams.com](http://sherwin-williams.com)ECO-FRIENDLY OPTION WITH  
BUILT-IN PRIMER**BEHR PREMIUM PLUS ULTRA SATIN ENAMEL (HOME DEPOT)**

\$39 (per gal.)

Impressive appearance after a simulated nine years made this an attractive pick. So did its resistance to cracking, color change, and mildew. It includes a built-in primer and has exceptionally low VOCs.

[homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com)TOP  
PICKCONSUMER REPORTS' TOP-RATED  
SEMIGLOSS EXTERIOR PAINT**VALSPAR DURAMAX SEMI-GLOSS**  
(LOWE'S)

\$40 (per gal.)

This paint comes with a built-in primer. It resisted cracking, color change, and dirt after the equivalent of nine years in the elements, and it meets even the toughest regional-California limits for VOCs.

[lowes.com](http://lowes.com)SMART CHOICE FOR  
FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS**ACE ROYAL EXTERIORS BY ACE**  
SEMI-GLOSS

\$29 (per gal.)

This Consumer Reports Best Buy still looked excellent after six years of simulated use and very good after nine. It resisted cracking and color change well, but not dirt or mildew.

[acehardware.com](http://acehardware.com)DURABLE CHOICE FOR DARK-COLORED  
TRIM AREAS**BEHR PREMIUM PLUS ULTRA**  
SEMI-GLOSS ENAMEL (HOME DEPOT)

\$40 (per gal.)

After three and six years of simulated weather effects, this paint still looked excellent, and very good after nine. It stood up well to cracking, color change, and mildew, but not dirt.

[homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com)More  
Picks From  
Consumer  
Reports

**BEHR**  
PREMIUM PLUS  
SEMI-GLOSS  
ENAMEL  
\$32

**SHERWIN-  
WILLIAMS**  
DURATION  
SEMI-GLOSS  
\$32

**GLIDDEN**  
SPRED SEMI-  
GLOSS  
\$28

**BENJAMIN  
MOORE**  
AURA SEMI-  
GLOSS  
\$68





TOP  
PICK

**CONSUMER REPORTS' TOP-RATED  
SOLID WOOD STAIN**

**BENJAMIN MOORE ARBORCOAT  
SOLID DECK & SIDING**

\$46 (per gal.)

This solid wood stain stood up well to our accelerated weatherizing tests, looking excellent after the equivalent of two years exposure to the elements, and very good even after three. [benjaminmoore.com](http://benjaminmoore.com)

**SMART, SOLID-STAIN CHOICE FOR  
FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS**

**BEHR SOLID COLOR  
WATERPROOFING WOOD STAIN**

\$29 (per gal.)

This Consumer Reports Best Buy was among the best solids in our tests. It still looked impressive after the equivalent of nine years on a house (and other vertical surfaces) and three years on a deck. [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com)

**GOOD BASIC SOLID STAIN  
FOR SIDING**

**CABOT SOLID ACRYLIC SIDING**

\$36 (per gal.)

This solid wood stain stood up well to our tests, maintaining its good looks superbly for the first year of simulated exposure, and well for the second and third years. It resisted cracking, color change, and dirt, but did not resist mildew. [cabotstain.com](http://cabotstain.com)

**\$avvy \$hopper**

When you're working with a painting contractor, the contract should specify the brand and line of stain—insist on top finishes—its cost, and how many coats to apply.

**EASY MAINTENANCE**

Composite and plastic decking offer the look of wood, with less upkeep.



**SOLID PERFORMER**

A solid deck stain from Benjamin Moore creates a warm backdrop for outdoor entertaining areas.

**NICELY PRICED  
SOLID WOOD STAIN**

**THOMPSON'S WATERSEAL  
DECK AND HOUSE SOLID LATEX**

\$26 (per gal.)

This Consumer Reports Best Buy performed superbly through a year of weather exposure and still looked good after the three. It resisted cracking, color change, and dirt. [thompsonswaterseal.com](http://thompsonswaterseal.com)

**CONSUMER REPORTS' TOP-RATED  
SEMITRANSSPARENT STAIN**

**BEHR PREMIUM SEMITRANSSPARENT  
WEATHERPROOFING WOOD STAIN  
(HOME DEPOT)**

\$37 (per gal.)

This finish still looked good after the equivalent of six years on vertical surfaces and two years on a deck. It also resisted cracking, color change, and mildew. [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com)

**CONSUMER REPORTS' TOP-RATED CLEAR  
WOOD FINISH**

**THOMPSON'S WATERSEAL  
ADVANCED WATERPROOFER**

\$23 (per gal.)

Clear finishes show the most wood grain but last the shortest. Others we tested looked shabby after the equivalent of three years on vertical surfaces and just one year on a deck; this one looked presentable. [thompsonswaterseal.com](http://thompsonswaterseal.com)



COLOR THEORY

How often have you found that a color that looks great on the chip is a miss once you get it up on the wall? Here's how to minimize fuss and expense by getting it right the first time:

**Keep room size in mind.** Color intensifies over large areas, so it's better to go too light than too dark in a given shade. Or you may want to use a bold color on just one wall.

**Consider the lighting.** Fluorescent light enhances blues and greens, but it dulls warm reds, oranges, and yellows. Incandescent light works better with warm colors than with cool tones.

**Pick the right white.** Pure whites have a bluish hue in certain lights. Warmer whites are easier to live with and to mix with other colors.

**See the whole picture.** If you use a bold color in one room, carry it into the surrounding living areas, perhaps as an accent wall or in a less saturated version. The repetition of color helps connect the spaces and makes each one feel more expansive.

**Use in-store tools.** Most chain retailers and paint stores sell sample jars, so you can try out a color before making a major investment. Most manufacturers also offer large color chips, which are easier to use than the conventional small swatches. In-store computer programs also let you view colors under various types of light.

**Explore interactive helpers.** Home Depot has a free smart-phone app that lets you mix and match colors before making a selection. Most of the major paint brands also offer a host of similar digital tools.

**Try sample colors on the wall.** Be sure to use different walls—the same color may look different in different exposures—and at various times of day. Paint practice boards (cardboard sheets finished with a simulated flat white finish), then hang them up (painter's tape works well for this) on each wall for a day or two to see how the color will look under the various light conditions of the room.



WARM THOUGHTS  
Earth tones can lend a cozy feeling to contemporary spaces.

More Top Picks From Consumer Reports

<b>KILZ</b> CASUAL COLORS SATIN \$30	<b>BEHR</b> PREMIUM PLUS SATIN ENAMEL \$27	<b>GLIDDEN</b> PREMIUM FLAT \$20	<b>VALSPAR</b> SIGNATURE SEMIGLOSS \$35
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TOP PICKS FROM CONSUMER REPORTS

Interior Paint

All of the paints we test are latex-based. A battery of tests revealed how well each product hid the paint below, as well as its surface smoothness, whether the gloss level changed, and whether it could withstand stains and scrubbing. Our testers evaluated resistance to mildew, sticking, and fading, along with its volatile organic compound (VOC) level. Almost all of the paints in our tests are claimed to be low- or no-VOC. None contains more than 50 grams of VOCs per liter.



CONSUMER REPORTS' TOP-RATED SATIN AND EGGSHELL PAINT

**BEHR PREMIUM PLUS ULTRA SATIN ENAMEL (HOME DEPOT)**  
\$34 (per gallon)

Self-priming and superb at hiding and resisting scrubbing, this paint was also one of the few satins that was very good at resisting stains. It left a smooth finish and stood up to rough cleaning.  
[homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com)

PREMIUM SATIN AND EGGSHELL PICK WITH GREAT COVERAGE

**BENJAMIN MOORE AURA SATIN**  
\$68 (per gallon)  
This self-priming satin paint was superb at hiding and very good at resisting stains. But its finish wasn't very smooth. And it may dull with harsh cleaning.  
[benjaminmoore.com](http://benjaminmoore.com)

CONSUMER REPORTS' TOP-RATED FLAT MATTE PAINT

**BEHR PREMIUM PLUS ULTRA MATTE (HOME DEPOT)**  
\$32 (per gallon)

This self-priming paint was one of the few flats that was excellent at hiding. It was also superb at resisting scrubbing. But like all flats it's not good at resisting stains. Its finish wasn't as smooth as some.  
[homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com)

GOOD FLAT MATTE CHOICE FOR COVERING DARK COLORS

**VALSPAR SIGNATURE MATTE (LOWE'S)**  
\$32 (per gallon)  
Among flat and matte paints it was one of the few that was excellent at hiding, and it left a smooth finish. It is self-priming and resists scrubbing, but like just about all flats it wasn't good at resisting stains.  
[lowes.com](http://lowes.com)

CONSUMER REPORTS' TOP-RATED SEMIGLOSS PAINT

**CLARK+KENSINGTON SEMI-GLOSS ENAMEL (ACE)**  
\$33 (per gallon)

This paint was among the few that were superb at hiding, leaving a smooth finish that was very good at resisting stains and excellent at resisting scrubbing, but it did get dull after rough cleaning.  
[acehardware.com](http://acehardware.com)

SELF-PRIMING SEMIGLOSS PAINT THAT RESISTS GLOSS CHANGE

**BEHR PREMIUM PLUS ULTRA SEMI-GLOSS ENAMEL (HOME DEPOT)**  
\$34 (per gallon)  
This high-scoring semigloss lets you skip priming and is superb at hiding and resisting scrubbing, and very good at resisting stains, with little change in sheen after rough cleaning.  
[homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com)



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