Chapter 1

Gathering What You Need

In This Chapter

▶ Gathering the tools you need

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You'll save time and energy if you assemble the essential tools for your paint project before you crack open a paint can. Nothing's worse than leaving a partially wet wall, for instance, to get a tool you forgot. That's especially true if you're using latex paint (formulated to dry quickly and often within an hour) because when you get back, you won't be able to blend your next brush strokes with the dry paint, and those transitions will be obvious when you finish the job. To ensure that you don't find yourself in that position, make a list of everything you need — tools, paint products, cleanup supplies, and so on — and gather it all before you begin.

This chapter makes the task easy by listing and describing tools for safety and for prepping and repairing your project. We also tell you what to think about when selecting sealer, primer, and paint, including information on basic painting tools, such as brushes, rollers, and roller covers, and specialized tools for decorative paint finishes. In addition, you can find items to help make cleanup much more simple.

Assembling a Painter's Toolbox

A carpenter wouldn't start a job without having a saw, hammer, level, and other tools on hand. Likewise, you can eliminate frustration and delays while you're working if you assemble the right stuff ahead of time. These sections list all the tools and supplies you'll need, whether your paint project is simple or complex. And while you're making that list in preparation for the shopping trip, think about what you already have at home or what you have access to — at your parents' and friends' houses, for example.

REMEMBER

Consider which items will likely serve you time and time again, such as putty knives, levels, stud finders, paintbrushes, and rollers, to name a few. It makes sense to look for quality when you're buying those multi-use tools. Quality doesn't necessarily mean paying top dollar either. Home improvement stores stock quality tools and sell them at a range of moderate prices. Your best bet is to buy the best one that you can afford.

Tools for safety

When you're working on household projects, such as painting a room, the old maxim "Better safe than sorry" is a good rule to follow. Preventing an accident or avoiding a health hazard is easier than recovering from it. So resist the temptation not to purchase safety equipment just to save money. Some safety tools, such as a ladder and scaffolding, are a long-term investment. Buy the best equipment that you can afford because you'll be using these items over and over again. For your overall health, and especially if you have allergies or are sensitive to strong chemicals, you won't want to skimp on the low-cost items either. See the following list and Figure 1-1 for details about safety items:

- **5- or 6-foot stepladder:** For working on or near the ceiling
- **Breathing mask:** Blocks dust and fumes from getting into your lungs
- **Goggles:** Keep paint, chemicals, dust, and dirt out of your eyes
- **Kneepads:** Think 40 years down the line — your knees will thank you then
- **Latex gloves:** Prevent contact allergies and speed up the cleanup process — they also protect your nails
- **Long-sleeved, loose fitting shirt and jeans or slacks:** Keep chemicals and other irritants off your skin
- **Painter's cap:** Protects your hair
- **Scaffolding:** Not essential for an indoor project, such as painting a room, but nice to have, especially when you're painting vaulted ceilings or giving the walls a faux finish (see the nearby sidebar on scaffolding for more information)

Figure 1-1: These safety items are essential for a do-it-yourselfer.

Ladder safety

The best, sturdiest ladders will send you tumbling to the ground if you don't follow these basic safety precautions when you're using one:

✔ Never, ever lean out to the side or try to brush some paint on a spot you missed that's just out of reach.

✔ Don't climb up onto the top rung or step. The top rungs are meant for handholds, not feet.

✔ If the ladder feels unstable, have a buddy hold it steady for you.

✔ Never step on the drop-down shelf on stepladders; the shelf is designed for holding paint buckets and tools, not people.

Tools for prep and repairs

Improvising and doing your project with items you have around the house may be possible. But tools designed for the task make the job easier and more time efficient. You can find the items you need for prep and repair work at hardware stores, home improvement centers, and discount stores, mostly for a relatively low cost. You may want to consider borrowing or renting more expensive items, such as a wallboard saw and wallboard screw gun.

The following tools come in handy when you're ready to prep your room prior to painting:

✔ **Chemical stripper:** This product removes old, damaged paint.

✔ **Denatured alcohol:** Use this product to clean up oil-based paint.

✔ **Electronic level:** Use this level to help you find plumb lines when you're painting stripes on a wall or straightening pictures.

Scaffolding: Buy, rent, or make your own

When you're painting a ceiling or doing faux finishes, scaffolding is great. With a scaffold, you can move around much more easily because you don't have to climb up and down a ladder to move it a foot or two. You don't have to worry about falling off a step or constantly moving tools or paint supplies on and off the drop-down shelf. You can build scaffolding by placing a 12-inch wide plank on two sawhorses or stepladders (just be sure to allow enough overhang on each side as a precaution to keep the plank in place). Or you can buy a scaffold that has hinges and folds up on itself for easy storage. If you don't think you'll use the scaffold often enough to justify the expense, consider borrowing or renting one. Most hardware and home improvement stores have all kinds of rental equipment available for do-it-yourselfers working on home improvement projects.

✔ **Etching acid:** Use this acid to prep the surface of concrete floors for painting.

✔ **Large bucket:** Fill with water and detergent for scrubbing surfaces.

✔ **Laundry bleach:** Bleach removes mold and mildew spores from your walls before you paint.

✔ **Primer:** This is a good undercoat for paint.

✔ **Screwdriver:** As always, you need one for fastening screws.

✔ **Sealer:** Use this item when you want to keep damaged areas from bleeding through your paint finish.

✔ **Sponge:** When you're scrubbing surfaces, you'll need a sponge. You also use them to create several faux finishes.

✔ **Sponge mop:** Use this tool to clean floors before painting them.

✔ **TSP cleanser:** This heavy-duty cleanser cleans surfaces without leaving residue.

✔ **Utility knife:** This knife is also known as a razor knife. You can use it for cutting wallpaper, scoring walls, cleaning up ragged edges on drywall, and dozens of other tasks. As the blade dulls, simply replace it with another. Just keep the knife and blades where children won't find them — they're super sharp. (See Figure 1-2 for an example.)

✔ **Vacuum cleaner and brush attachment:** Try this tool for an easy way to remove dust and debris.

✔ **Wallpaper remover solution:** This solution loosens glue from the wallpaper backing and from the wall.

Figure 1-2: A utility knife and a masonry chisel.

Sometimes you need to repair your walls before you can prep and paint. In those instances, you may need the following tools:

✔ **Broad knife:** When you're patching plaster, try a broad knife. Unless you plan to patch walls and ceilings throughout your home, borrow a broad knife from a family member or a friend. If that's not possible, go ahead and buy one. They aren't expensive, even if they sit on a shelf for the next 50 years. (See Figure 1-3 for a picture of a broad knife.)

Figure 1-3: A small putty knife and a broad knife are good repair tools.

- ✔ **Drywall mud and tape:** Use these two items to seal seams between patches and the wall.

- ✔ **Electric mixer:** Not just for baking; use just one beater for mixing plaster when you're repairing small cracks and holes.

- ✔ **Masonry chisel:** This tool helps you repair cracks in plaster or take grout from between tiles. (Refer to Figure 1-2 to see an example.)

- ✔ **Patching compound:** Use this compound to fill in holes and dents.

- ✔ **Putty knife:** Use this knife to apply patching compounds. A small putty knife can be used for so many tasks — other than putty — that it should be a household staple. (Check out Figure 1-3 to see how this knife compares to a broad knife.)

- ✔ **Sandpaper/sanding block:** Whenever you use patching compounds to fill in holes or have imperfections or blemishes on an area, you have to make the surface smooth again before painting. Various grits of sandpaper will do the trick. A sanding block isn't necessary, but using one makes the job easier on your fingers and hands. One block will last forever. (See Figure 1-4 for a sanding block with sandpaper.)

Figure 1-4: Steel wool pads, sanding block with sandpaper, and a tack cloth.

✔ **Steel wool pads:** Like sandpaper, this tool also works to smooth a surface. Because steel wool has a variety of uses, such as cleaning a grill, keep a supply on hand. (Figure 1-4 shows you an example of steel wool pads.)

✔ **Tack cloth:** This tool wipes up dust without scattering it and removes other residue when you're done with a project. (Refer to Figure 1-4 for an example.)

✔ **Trim shellac or sealer:** Use these materials to keep wood stains from bleeding through new paint.

✔ **Wood filler:** This filler is handy for patching holes and imperfections.

Tools for basic painting

A brush is a brush, and a roller is a roller, right? Not quite. Paintbrushes come in various sizes and shapes, and with different handles. You also have to decide what kind of bristles you want and at what cost. *Roller cages* (the skeletal frame that includes the handle and "ribs" that rotate) and their covers come in several lengths. You have to select the length of the nap on covers and what it's made of. You find helpful information about selecting the right tool for your project on the packaging, and you can ask a salesperson for help. And check out the overviews of paintbrushes and rollers in this chapter.

You can choose the size of a brush and its shape, such as tapered or flat-bottomed, according to the job it's designed for. The smaller brushes, called trim or sash brushes, come in 1- to 3-inch widths. They're intended for use in small, tight spaces, and if the bristles are tapered, you can expect them to get into corners and grooves much more easily than a flat-bottomed brush of the same size. Likewise, wider brushes (called paint or wall brushes) come in 3- to 5-inch widths and are designed for painting large flat surfaces. As you increase the width of the brush, you compromise control and precision. Handles are made of wood or plastic and have different shapes. Get a handle that feels comfortable in your hand. If you're using latex paint, select a brush that has synthetic bristles. Listed here are some of your choices (see Figure 1-5 for examples):

✔ **1-inch angled sash brush:** Choose one with a stubby handle to paint edges and trim. They're also available with flat ends and longer handles.

✔ **2-inch angled sash brush:** This brush is used for cutting in corners and edges, and painting narrow window sashes and sills.

✔ **3-inch flat bristle sash brush:** We recommend the regular handle; use it for wide trim and sashes.

✔ **3-inch wall brush:** Use this one for floors, walls, and ceilings.

✔ **Small chip brush:** Use this brush to get paint into tight corners and spaces.

Figure 1-5: A 2-inch angled sash brush, a small chip brush, and a 3-inch flat sash brush.

Rollers are available in mini to 12-inch (and bigger) sizes. The mini (or trim) rollers are good for painting woodwork and other small areas. To work on walls and ceilings, choose a 9-inch roller; the larger sizes are heavier and will make you tire more quickly. A roller cage with plastic ribs holds up better than cardboard cages. Plastic can be cleaned, and it lasts longer than a cheaper version. As with bristles on a paintbrush, roller nap is made from natural or synthetic fibers. Nap is available in various lengths, so use the one recommended for the surface you're painting. In general, the longer the nap, the more paint it will hold. See Figure 1-6 to see some differences among rollers, and as a guideline, use

- ✔ **¼-inch nap** for smooth or fine surfaces, such as new walls, ceilings, wood doors, and trim
- ✔ **⅜-inch nap** for smooth to light-textured walls
- ✔ **½-inch nap** for most walls and medium rough surfaces, such as textured plaster, and concrete
- ✔ **¾-inch nap** for rough surfaces, such as textured walls and ceilings, textured plaster, and concrete

TIP

If you want a general-purpose roller cover, select a ⅜- or ½-inch nap.

Figure 1-6: Smooth, slightly nappy, and thick roller covers.

Selecting the best sealing and priming products

Sometimes sealing and priming isn't an either-or choice; your project may require both coats. People often use sealer and primer interchangeably, but they don't do the same job. Go to a paint specialist and explain what you want to do and any problems you have with the surface. Ask for advice and a low cost solution. In the meantime, here's the essential information about sealers, primers, and sealer/primer combinations.

Sealers keep stains, smoke, and soot on previously painted walls from bleeding through freshly applied paint. They seal the surface of soft and hard wood trim, hiding knot holes and stains. They also prevent textured ceilings from soaking up too much paint. Sealers are formulated for many different surfaces and to handle specific problems, so you have to find the right one. Prices vary depending on the formula. You may be able to opt for a combination sealer/primer, as we explain later in this sidebar.

It takes two coats of paint to make your walls look best. Use a primer as the first coat. Primers coat surfaces — walls, woodwork, trim, ceilings — so that the finish coats of paint adhere to the surfaces. They enhance the paint by providing a toothy surface that paint can stick to, helping to ensure even and smooth finish-coat coverage. Previously painted walls can act as a primer, but don't rely on the old paint if it's marred or if it's glossy paint and you want to use a latex eggshell or flat finish. On unpainted walls — plaster, Sheetrock (also called drywall), wood — the first coat soaks in and the second coat gives the wall the richness it deserves in the color you expect. You can do the wall twice in the finish coat, but that entails needless expense since finish paint costs more than primer. So use a primer for the first coat, and then paint over it with one coat of quality finish paint.

Even if you're working on a previously painted surface, you may need to prime, especially if bright or dark colors (think bright reds, black, and some shades of green) have been used. Primers can be tinted to provide a helpful color base if you're going over bright or dark colors. You can add mildewcides and moldicides to primers when you're painting high-moisture areas, such as bathrooms, kitchen backsplashes, laundry rooms, or even condo hallways in hurricane-prone areas.

When you go to the store to get your materials, let the salesperson know if you plan to do more than one thing — such as walls and woodwork — and ask whether a universal primer or combination sealer/primer would work best. Purchasing just one product reduces cost and eliminates the potential of storing several half-empty cans on a shelf. A combination sealer/primer may be more expensive than getting an inexpensive can of sealer and a cheap primer, but you'll save time.

The brush and roller are the most obvious tools you need for basic painting. But the following items are also helpful:

✔ **1-quart plastic paint bucket or container with lid:** Use one of these to mix and store paint. Smaller paint buckets or containers that have lids come in handy for storing leftover paint.

✔ **1- or 2-gallon household bucket:** Use these buckets to mix acid and water to etch concrete floors. If you're doing a faux finish, these buckets are great for mixing paint and glazes.

✔ **5-gallon bucket with a roller screen:** You can use this item for distributing paint on the cover rather than constantly refilling a flat roller tray.

✔ **5-in-1 tool:** This tool has a variety of uses. Use the blunt edge to open paint cans or as a flat-head screwdriver. The sharp edge is good for stripping or scraping paint. The pointed edge gets into grooves so that you can remove dirt, debris, or excess paint. With the back end, you can drive in nails or close paint cans. The curved side is handy for scraping off excess paint when you're cleaning the roller. And with the bonus "tear drop" in the center, you can remove nails that have small heads. (See Figure 1-7 if you're wondering what this tool looks like.)

✔ **Blue painter's tape:** This tape, available in an assortment of widths, protects edges from unwanted spatters and splotches. The tape has a waxy coating that doesn't allow paint to penetrate, and paint can't seep under tape pressed firmly in place. Best of all, if you remove it at the right time, this tape won't damage freshly painted walls. Taping edges takes time, but the reward is taking the tape off and seeing that you have crisp lines where ceilings meet walls and between walls and trim. (Check out this item in Figure 1-8.)

✔ **Clean, dry rags:** Keep these on hand for cleanup and to spot-clean drips of paint.

✔ **Disposable liners:** Use these liners in your paint tray to reduce cleanup time. (Figure 1-10 shows you the liners and the paint tray.)

Figure 1-7: Wooden stir stick, a 5-in-1 tool, and a paint can opener.

Figure 1-8: Blue painter's tape and a dropcloth keep your workspace tidy.

Figure 1-9: Roller cages, extension handles, paint trays, and liners come in handy.

✔ **Dropcloths:** Use these plastic sheets to protect floors and furnishing. (This item is shown in Figure 1-8.) Newspapers work in a pinch.

✔ **Extension handle:** These extensions screw into the handle of roller cages and come in 4- and 8-foot lengths. They let you get into hard-to-reach places and speed up painting flat surfaces, such as walls, ceilings, and floors. You get more control with the shorter length, but you'll have to use a ladder to reach the ceiling or top of walls. (Figure 1-9 shows you this tool.)

✔ **Paint can opener:** You want to use a paint can opener because it won't dent the paint can and the lid — a screwdriver or another makeshift opener might. If the can or lid is damaged, the can won't seal properly and the product can dry out or form a surface skin. (Figure 1-7 shows this tool.)

✔ **Paint tray:** Use a paint tray to load paint onto a roller. Paint trays have wells for holding paint and ribs for distributing and removing excess paint from the roller. Durable metal trays will last for years if you clean them thoroughly. Alternately, you can use inexpensive, disposable plastic liners inside your tray to lengthen its life and for quick cleanup. (See Figure 1-9.)

✔ **Permanent black marker:** Keep one handy to write on the lids of the containers you use for storing paint. Write the date, the name of the paint, where it was used, and the mixing formula.

Selecting a quality brush

If you've ever painted anything with a cheap brush, you know that the bristles come off. You find them floating in the paint and stuck on the walls. The bristles on a cheap brush are stiff and very likely to leave bristle marks on wet surfaces. A quality brush has flexible bristles that don't fall out. It costs much more than a cheap brush, but it's worth every penny because you don't get frustrated by debris left on the wet paint and you don't have to waste time picking it out. And the flexible bristles allow you to use the brush at any angle. A quality brush is easier to clean and can be used repeatedly if you clean it thoroughly and hang it up while the bristles dry.

You can choose from natural and synthetic bristles. Synthetics — such as nylon or a nylon/polyester blend — can be used with latex, oil-based, or alkyd paints, and all types of varnishes. They're easy to clean; the bristles don't get soft or misshapen while you're working. Never use a natural bristle brush with latex paint; natural fibers soak up water, and latex has a water-based formula. Natural bristle brushes, usually hog bristles or ox hair, are soft and spread oil-based paint smoothly and evenly.

- **Plastic spray bottle and water:** Use this combo to clean up latex paint splotches.

- **Roller cage:** You need this tool to support the roller cover. (See Figure 1-9 for an example.)

- **Supply of old newspapers:** This supply comes in handy as dropcloths or additional protection on furnishings and floors, but note that they don't protect as well as plastic dropcloths. You can also "paint" them to get excess paint off brushes and rollers when you're cleaning them.

- **Wood stir sticks:** You need them for mixing paint. Paint stores routinely hand out stir sticks when you buy paint. Even though the paint is well shaken at the store, stir the paint again each time you open the can. (Check out Figure 1-7 to see stir sticks.)

Tools for decorative painting

Faux finishes and other decorative paint applications use special tools and glazes as well as the more common tools mentioned earlier in this chapter. Often, specialized tools aren't used for other faux finishes. Paint stores and home improvement centers carry most of the specialized tools. For some finishes, you need only tools you already have — pencils, rulers, yardsticks, and so on. A word of advice: Hang onto those old plastic and paper grocery bags. You can use them to create some finishes. Also keep a good supply of torn or stained t-shirts and cut them up for rags to use while you're painting or cleaning up.

A lot of the projects in this book ask you to apply paint or glaze with these fairly traditional brushes, rollers, and other applicators:

- ✔ **2-inch angled sash brush:** Use this brush for leather, stripes, and clouds.

- ✔ **2-inch flat sash brush:** This is the brush you want for glazed finishes.

- ✔ **3-inch flat sash brush (or colorwashing brush):** Use this brush for color-washing and stippling finishes.

- ✔ **3-inch paintbrush:** Use this versatile brush for suede finishes.

- ✔ **3-inch wallpaper brush:** Use it to drag glaze off your base coat. You can substitute a dragging brush or wood graining comb if your project has a dragged finish. (See Figure 1-10 to look at this brush.)

- ✔ **4-inch flat sash brush:** Use this brush for a gradient finish.

- ✔ **12-inch wallpaper brush:** This brush creates chambray, dragging, and metallic finishes. (Figure 1-10 shows this brush as well as a smaller version.)

Figure 1-10: Two wallpaper brushes, a colorwashing brush, and a stippling brush.

- ✔ **Artist's brushes:** These brushes come in small, medium, and large sizes. You can choose narrow and round bristled brushes. Select one of these brushes for faux finishes such as stenciling.

- ✔ **Mini-roller:** Use the 4- or 6-inch size for dragging, stripes, bagging, checker-board, and harlequin finishes. If a finish calls for one of these mini-rollers, you need the roller cage and a cover. Don't try to make do with a 9-inch roller because it can't reach into small, tight areas. ***Bonus:*** After you use this roller for a specialty project, you have just the right tool for getting into corners on routine paint projects. (Figure 1-11 shows a mini-roller on a cage.)

- ✔ **Sea sponges:** Use these sponges for the sponging off and sponging on projects. Sponging with a sea sponge creates a much more realistic look than any synthetic sponge can provide. (See Figure 1-12 for a glimpse of a sea sponge.)

Selecting a quality roller cover

Along with selecting the right depth of the nap for the project, choose a quality roller cover to get a satisfying finish. A lambskin cover works best if the surface is smooth and when you're using an alkyd or oil-based paint. If you're applying primer, glossy paint, or enamel, look for a mohair cover. For gloss and semi-gloss paint and clear finish coats, a foam rubber cover also does a good job. Foam rollers are easy to use and clean, but if you load too much paint on one, it drips. A roller's ability to hold paint and apply it evenly depends on the density of the nap. Because inexpensive rollers tend to get matted, paint will look uneven or patchy if the roller sheds lint that sticks to the paint, even if you're using quality paint.

Figure 1-11: A mini-roller and a larger suede roller.

✔ **Sheepskin pad:** This tool is your best bet for creating a cloud finish. Don't improvise — you can't create the same look with other tools. (Figure 1-12 shows this natural tool.)

✔ **Shower squeegee:** Notch the squeegee and use it as a guideline in marking the wall for a wavy stripe finish. (Check out Figure 1-12 for details.)

✔ **Small artist's liner brush:** Use this brush for fine detailing in stencil finishes. (See Figure 1-13 for one of these brushes.)

Figure 1-12: A sheepskin pad, a sea sponge, a shower squeegee, and a large steel trowel.

Figure 1-13: Use a small artist's brush or a stencil brush for detail work.

✔ **Small chip brush:** Use this brush for stippling, bagging, and colorwashing finishes. You should also try this brush when you need to get paint into tight areas or fill voids in the colorwashing and stippling finishes.

✔ **Small wiz roller:** This roller is best for ragging. It has numerous tiny pieces of cloth that flap onto the surface you're finishing. It's a lot like a mini version of what you see in a car wash.

✔ **Steel trowel:** Use this tool to apply Venetian plaster to your walls. (Figure 1-12 shows you an example of this tool.)

✔ **Stencil brush:** Naturally, you want to use one of these when you're stenciling. This brush helps you pounce the stencil pattern onto your wall. (Figure 1-13 shows this brush.)

✔ **Stippling brush:** Use this brush dry on your finish coat to create a multitude of tiny points of base color. It's also your best bet for stippling and colorwashing finishes. You can use a dry 3-inch flat sash brush as a substitute. (Flip back to Figure 1-10 for a look at this brush.)

✔ **Suede roller:** Use this specialized roller only with suede paint to create a suede finish. (See Figure 1-11.)

Some of the tools you need for decorative painting are everyday items that you wouldn't necessarily associate with painting. You probably have lots of the items in this list already, and the ones you don't have are easily obtainable:

✔ **Blank newsprint:** You can pick up this material at an office supply store; it's used in flip charts. Use it when you're doing a frottage finish.

✔ **Brown paper bags or heavy-weight brown mailing paper:** Use either of these for the frottage technique.

✔ **Clean rags and terry cloth towels:** You use these for almost all paint finishes. Recycle old t-shirts by turning them into clean rags and keep a good supply on hand. (They make great dust cloths, too, if you dampen them slightly with water.) The terry cloth towels are used for colorwashing, ragging off, and glazing techniques.

✔ **Disposable plastic plates:** These everyday items are perfect disposable paint palettes.

✔ **Heavy-weight plastic bag:** This is another tool you can use for the frottage finish.

✔ **Heavy-weight sheet of solid plastic:** Use this tool to encourage your inner artist and create your own stencil design.

✔ **Hobby knife:** Use this knife to cut out stencils. A utility knife works well too.

✔ **Level:** Use a level when you're creating pattern finishes, such as stripes, stencils, color blocks, checkerboard, harlequin, and for dragging (including grasscloth, denim, and linen) finishes.

✔ **Pencils:** Make sure you have both plain and colored pencils for marking patterns and lines before you start painting.

✔ **Plain white tissue paper:** This is a key tool if you want a crumpled tissue paper finish on your walls.

✔ **Plastic grocery bags:** This tool gives the bagging technique its name.

✔ **Plastic wrap:** Use this as an alternate for grocery bags in the bagging technique.

✔ **Scissors:** For cutting sponges and paper patterns for stencils.

✔ **White poster board:** Use this for trying out paint and glaze combinations and practicing finishing techniques before you start any of the projects.

✔ **Yardstick, tape measure, and ruler:** For measuring patterns and marking walls so that you know where to apply certain finishes and colors.

If you're interested in a faux finish or other decorative techniques, you may need some of the following glazes, varnishes, and adhesives. Water-based latex glazes can be used only on top of latex paint. However, oil-based glazes can be used on both latex and alkyd paint. Because oil-based glazes dry slower than latex glazes, you have more time to work on complex finish designs. Oil-based glazes generally have a rich, warm hue and therefore aren't well suited to finish white or pastel colors.

✔ **Acrylic glaze:** Provides a transparent, slightly tinted finish pattern over latex base paint. This glaze, like the latex paint, is water-based.

✔ **Acrylic gloss varnish:** Water-based varnish provides a hard, non-yellowing, glossy seal coat on latex glazes. Use it to keep finishes from being chipped or scratched.

✔ **Acrylic spray varnish:** Spray this water-based sealer on porous or large surfaces, such as the top of a table or chest of drawers, to give them a durable finish. Use with latex glazes to prevent water marks, chips, and scratches.

✔ **Crackle glaze:** Using a glaze that's one shade off the base color gives the finished surface a subtle crackled effect.

✔ **Matte acrylic varnish:** When you don't want a shiny surface that reflects light, using this product gives you a subtle, yet hard, protective coat. It intensifies dull colors and isn't removable.

✔ **Metallic glaze:** Metallic finishes give base coats a soft, radiant glow. You can get an elegant patina, a brushed metal finish, or a naturally weathered look that you'd find on cast iron furnishings and accessories.

✔ **Ready-to-use wallpaper adhesive:** Use this roll-on adhesive to seal tissue paper finishes to the wall.

✔ **Spray adhesive:** This adhesive holds the stencil pattern in place while you paint the designs on the wall, and then releases the pattern easily. You may see it labeled as stencil spray adhesive.

Tools for cleanup

No one enjoys cleaning up after a paint project, but manufacturers have designed products to take some of the burden off cleaning up brushes, rollers, and paint trays. Supplies that will help you with the cleanup chore include

✔ **Krud Kutter:** This product is a cleanser that works well on latex glaze cleanup.

✔ **Mild liquid soap:** Use the same stuff you use in the kitchen to clean up latex paint.

✔ **Mineral spirits or paint thinner:** When you're ready to clean up alkyd or oil-based paint and varnish finishes, use mineral spirits or paint thinner. You can also prep your roller cover with thinner when you're using oil-based paints. Both mineral spirits and paint thinner do the job well, but a container of mineral spirits is kinder to your wallet.

✔ **Paint strainer or cheesecloth:** Either of these tools helps you strain debris out of leftover paint. You'll want to do that before you reuse the paint for touch ups or other projects.

✔ **Rubber mallet:** Use this tool to close paint can lids. A regular hammer will do if you tap gently.

✔ **Small empty paint cans:** Recycle your empty paint cans by using them to store excess paint in an airtight container. Dab a dot of paint on the lid, and write the color and mixing code on the lid with permanent marker. Then you know what's in the paint can without opening it and exposing the paint to air. A small lidded plastic bucket works as well.

✔ **Wire brush or comb:** These items remove excess paint from a paintbrush before you clean it.

Extras worth considering

Some other tools aren't required but can make paint projects much simpler. Consider the following tools before you start your next paint job:

✔ **Brush and roller spinner:** These tools are great for cleaning up latex paint and then for removing excess water from your brushes and rollers after you clean them. (See Figure 1-14.) Spin brushes and rollers into a large cardboard box or bucket to contain any spatter.

Figure 1-14: A pour spout, squirrel attachment, brush and roller spinner, pad painter, and paint guard.

✔ **Electric finishing sander:** Use this tool to smooth surfaces quicker than you can with elbow grease.

✔ **Foam pad painters in various shapes and sizes:** Whether washable or disposable, these foam pad painters come in handy when you need to paint into tight corners. The smaller pad is best for those corners, while a larger pad is great for painting paneled doors. Whatever size you choose, the pad painter looks like a paintbrush whose bristles have been replaced by a foam sponge.

✔ **Liquid chemical deglosser:** This product dulls the surface of glossy paint; use it before applying latex paint over a glossy paint.

✔ **Metal paint guard:** This tool guarantees that when you're painting edges on the wall, the brush won't smear paint on the ceiling, floor, or trim by accident. (Check out Figure 1-14.)

✔ **Pour spout for paint can:** A pour spout makes pouring paint into a roller tray or bucket less messy and can prevent unwanted spills. (Figure 1-14 shows this handy tool.)

✔ **Squirrel paint mixer electric drill attachment:** If you have a drill, this attachment helps mix paint to avoid settlement. If you don't have one, use a stir stick. (See Figure 1-14 for a look at this attachment.)

Narrowing Down Your Paint Options

All paint products have one of two common bases — water or oil. The base gives paint particular characteristics that come into play when you're selecting a finish, getting the right brushes and rollers, and cleaning up afterward. The following sections give you the pros and cons of latex and alkyd paint, and tell you about all the various sheens you can choose from when you're selecting the best paint for your project.

Deciding on latex or alkyd

Latex paints are now formulated to dry within as little as an hour, which homeowners like because they can put the room back together much more quickly. But when you're painting, you have a smaller window for taking breaks because of the quick drying time. And washing latex may cause the finish to look streaky or uneven when it's dry. Water-based latex paint is also popular with do-it-yourselfers because you can clean brushes, rollers, and paint trays quickly with common household products; all you need is a mild dishwashing detergent and water. You can remove unintended splotches of paint as you work by wiping them off with a damp cloth. Latex provides a flat, dull surface that can look sophisticated and elegant, unlike the shine of glossy oil-based paint. But dry latex finishes aren't as easily cleaned or scrubbed as oil-based paint.

Oil-based and alkyd paints dry slowly — in 12 or more hours — and have much more sheen or gloss than water-based paint gives you. They're durable, sanitary, and have a hard finish that can be scrubbed and cleaned without worrying about leaving streaks. You need paint thinner or mineral spirits to clean up mistakes, and to clean up the brushes and rollers you use to apply alkyd or oil-based paint. That's not so bad when you're dipping a paintbrush into a can filled with paint thinner, but removing paint from a roller and cover is messy.

Most homeowners, therefore, prefer latex paint for most projects. They can use one of the finishes that has enough sheen to be cleanable. (See the next section for a discussion on sheen.)

Selecting a paint sheen

The sheen — how bright or shiny the paint looks when it dries — varies according to different paint products. Latex paint looks dull in comparison to shinier oil-based paints because latex paint tends to absorb light while glossy paint reflects it. Along with the way the finished project looks, sheen determines how well the finish holds up to finger marks and crayon, and how easily it shows imperfections. It determines the ambiance of a room, whether it's sophisticated and elegant or utilitarian in appearance. The look, durability, and ambiance you want generally determine which particular paint is best for you.

Just because oil paints are naturally shinier than latex paints, however, doesn't mean that you can't get a nice sheen with the more user-friendly latex paint. Manufacturers give latex paint varying grades or levels of sheen — those levels also determine how cleanable the paint is. The following list tells you more about some of the sheens, and Figure 1-15 shows you some of the different sheens side by side. *Note:* Names and choices may vary, depending on the manufacturer.

✔ **Flat latex paint** has an opaque finish that looks elegant on interior walls and ceilings. It's also the most dense, or most light absorbing, of all the paint choices. It doesn't clean well and isn't suited for kitchens, baths, or children's bedrooms. If you have children in the house, just know that the only way to get rid of finger marks and scribbles on this finish is to paint over them.

✔ **An eggshell finish** provides a low luster on interior walls and is used for many decorative finishes. It cleans up better than matte and flat paint, but we recommend more sheen in the paint you use in kitchens and bathrooms.

✔ **Satin finish,** which has more sheen than an eggshell finish, cleans even better than the finishes that make up the beginning of this list. It's a good choice for woodwork, walls, doors, and hallways. You can use it in a bathroom or kitchen if you prefer not to use a glossy paint — but satin isn't as scrubbable as the glossy paints.

✔ **Semi-gloss paint** gives a shiny look to a room, but it's not as shiny as a high-gloss paint. It's scrubbable and good for moldings, doors, windows, kitchens, and baths.

✔ **A high-gloss finish** reflects the most light and definitely shines. But it's also stain resistant and scrubbable, which makes it a good choice for kitchens and baths — the areas of a home that get the most wear and tear. When you use this finish, you don't have to worry about a tomato (whole or in ketchup form) crashing to the floor and spraying up on the wall, and even a cola or wine stain will clean up easily.

One caveat: When you're deciding on which sheen you want to use, remember the higher the sheen, the darker and more intense the color will be.
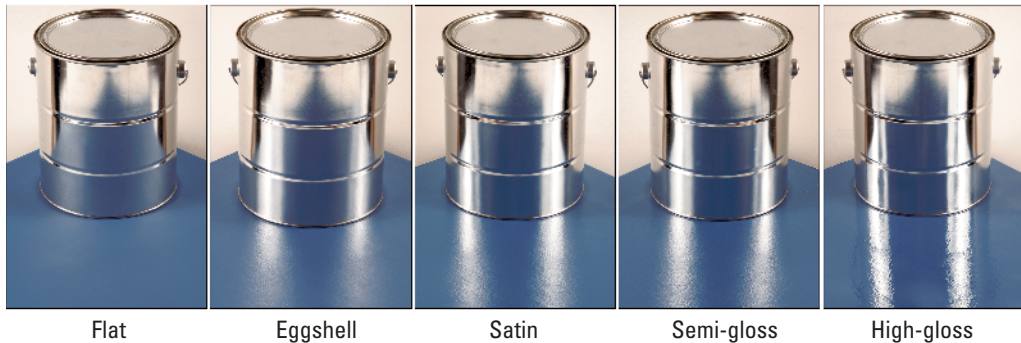

| Flat | Eggshell | Satin | Semi-gloss | High-gloss |

Figure 1-15: Compare the various sheens and decide which works best for you.

Determining How Much Paint You Need

Whether you paint an entire room, a single wall, or a section (or all) of your floor, you want to make sure that you have enough paint to finish the project you start. Figure out how much paint you need by using the formulas in this section. Determining the amount of paint you need before you start is especially important for larger rooms. You want each gallon you purchase to be consistent in color; this consistency is easier to achieve if you purchase all your paint at the same time. Use the handy table on the Cheat Sheet in the front of this book to keep track of how much paint you need.

REMEMBER

You get what you pay for. If you want to cover your walls with just one coat, purchase quality paint even though it costs more than some brands on the market. If you choose a cheaper option, you may find that, ultimately, you have to purchase several gallons of paint and go over the walls several times to get good coverage.

For walls

You usually can't return unused cans of custom mixed paint, so if you buy too many, you have to store the excess, paint another room the same color, give away what you don't use, or hope your local store will let you exchange the unopened paint cans for another color. At the same time, having a partial gallon sitting around is nice — you can later use the paint to touch up marred walls. Just make sure you accurately estimate how much you need so you aren't surprised when you have too much, or too little, paint.

To determine what it will take to coat the walls once, use the following formula:

1. **Add together the length of each wall.**

    For example, 16 + 16 + 20 + 20 = 72 feet

2. **Multiply the total length of walls by the total height.**

    72 feet × 9 feet = 648 square feet

3. **Subtract 20 square feet per door and 15 square feet per window.**

    648 – 20 – 20 – 20 – 15 – 15 – 15 – 15 = 528 square feet

4. **Divide the answer by 350 (the estimated coverage/gallon) for smooth walls; divide by 300 for rough or textured walls, which soak up more paint.**

    528 ÷ 350 = 1.5 gallons for smooth walls

    528 ÷ 300 = 1.76 gallons for rough/textured walls

For floors and ceilings

If you're painting a smooth ceiling or floor, all you have to do is calculate the square footage of the surface. Note that rough surfaces, however, reduce the square footage covered by a gallon of paint. Read the information provided by the manufacturer to determine how much paint you'll need for a rough surface. Just follow these steps to determine how much paint you need for smooth floors and ceilings:

1. **Multiply the length of the floor or ceiling by the width of the floor or ceiling.**

    For example, 16 × 20 = 320 square feet

2. **Divide your answer by 350 (estimated coverage per gallon).**

    320 ÷ 350 = 0.914 gallons