



Proper care greatly extends the life of high-quality brushes. Most painters today do not clean and reuse roller covers, but we've included that topic in case the situation calls for it. If you choose to invest the time in cleaning your applicators, here are some tips to improve the results.

General Advice



- Every coating is different—refer to the paint label for the manufacturer's cleaning instructions.
- Prime the applicator before painting, to make it load faster and clean easier. Wet it thoroughly with fresh water, then spin it out and blot with a paper towel until it is just slightly damp. Wooster recommends "breaking in" a brush or roller like this only for water-based paints, using water.
- Always clean immediately after use, and it will take much less time and be more effective.
- Do not allow brushes to soak for long periods. Soaking may cause the adhesive that holds the filaments to fail, damage the filaments themselves, make wooden handles swell or crack, or ferrules rust.
- We advise against using the same brush in both oil- and water-based coatings. Keep one set of brushes for latex or acrylics and another set for oils. This will make cleaning uncomplicated and extend the life of the brushes.



Paintbrushes

It isn't the brush's fault...many of today's coatings are designed to dry quickly, making them problematic when it comes to cleanup. The paint resins bind to brush filaments and set up within a very short period of time. To improve cleanup, we recommend a 3-step process. It helps preserve the filaments and fine tips in professional paintbrushes and lengthen the life of the tools.

For Water-Based Paints (Synthetic Brushes)

STEP 1 Rinse the paint from the brush with warm water while combing out the brush from base to end with both sides of our 1831 Painter's Comb™. This will ensure that you have loosened all partially dried paint from the inside of the brush.

STEP 2 Add a liberal amount of hand cleaner with pumice to the brush and work it in completely. There are many brands of hand cleaner that will



do the job—some are liquid, while others are a thick paste that are scooped out of the container. Hand cleaner that is petroleum or lanolin based will help condition the brush, too. Again, use the comb to get paint out of the interior of the brush.

STEP 3 Rinse the brush well, until the water runs clear of all paint and hand cleaner. You may need to add some regular hand soap during this final process for very hard-to-clean primers, paints, and stains. After the final rinse, do one last comb-through to make sure the paint is completely removed from the center of the brush. Then spin, comb, and hang to dry.



For Oil-Based Paints (Bristle or Synthetic Brushes)

Oil-based coatings are exceptionally difficult to clean. Due to the cost and disposal problems of solvents and the time involved for the process, it may not make sense economically to clean the brushes. Instead, allow them to dry and throw them away.

However, if you do want to try to reuse them, work excess coating out of the brush and clean immediately after use. Mineral spirits, paint thinners, and lacquer cleaners are designed for this process. There's such a wide variety of oil-based coatings—polyurethanes, stains, enamels, varnishes, primers—always read the manufacturer's recommendations on the can label.

Keep cleaning with the recommended solvent. Massage the solvent into the brush bristles. Change the solvent as it gets cloudy or dirty. And when you think the brush is clean, do it again. For synthetic brushes, wash with solvent and then follow with the 3-step process. Natural bristle brushes should not be cleaned in soap and water. Use only the solvent recommended for thinning the coating to keep the bristles from flaring. Then spin, comb, and hang to dry.



Roller Covers

It's a losing battle to try to clean roller covers that have been used in oil-based coatings; simply let the cover dry and put it in the trash. Even with latex and acrylics, most people choose not to clean synthetic roller covers because it takes too much time and it's rarely effective—in the end, it doesn't offset the cost of a new cover. However, shearling (natural sheepskin) covers are an investment worth preserving. (You can also use these tips for cleaning synthetic covers, if desired.)

- Scrape out excess paint with a 5-in-1 tool. Clean immediately after use.
- Rinse the roller cover thoroughly with running water.
- Wash with soap and warm water, then rinse. Choose a detergent that contains petroleum distillates for the best results (check the label). Repeat the wash and rinse steps until the water runs clear.
- Spin until damp. To avoid matting of the fabric, stand on end to dry.



Protect Your Investment

• The 1831 Wooster Painter's Comb™ is a valuable tool to speed up cleaning. The tight heel portion of a brush (near the ferrule) is the hardest part to clean. If old paint stays in the heel, it will build up and cause the brush to lose its flex and capacity. Use the comb to separate the filaments, allowing soap and water into the heel during cleaning, and afterward to straighten the filaments before storing.



- When using fast-drying coatings, or working in dry, hot or windy conditions, you'll need to clean the brushes frequently, perhaps every two to four hours. Keeping an extra set of brushes on hand will allow you to remain productive while the used brushes dry after cleanup.
- If you can't clean your brush or roller immediately following a job, wet it with paint, seal it in aluminum foil, or a plastic bag with the handle sticking out and tied closed with a twist tie or rubber band. This keeps the brush or roller from hardening until it can be cleaned properly.

• After cleaning, dry a brush or roller by shaking and spinning it thoroughly. Then take more moisture out with paper towels or a clean rag. Never hit a brush on a pail or the top of your shoe to get water out. It can permanently damage the epoxy holding the brush filaments.

• Store brushes hanging inside their keepers, or wrap the brush in a paper grocery bag, clean newsprint, or aluminum foil. If you can't hang your brush, at least lay it flat. Don't stand a brush on its end, which will cause the filaments to curl. Store roller covers upright in a paper bag (not plastic) or cardboard box to avoid flat spots in the fabric.



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