

further if the paint system is spray applied and not backrolled.

To minimize texture variations, use 150 grit or finer sandpaper or "wet" sand the joints.

You can also equalize texture by applying a primer recommended by the drywall manufacturer or by skim coating the entire surface with joint compound.

Bill Chandler, of Modern Decorating, Inc., in Richmond, Virginia, goes with the first approach. His primer of choice is Sheetrock First Coat, a flat latex paint prime coat from USG, formulated to equalize the texture and porosity differences between joint compound and drywall.

"We've discovered, over the years, that the sealers on the market really don't take care of the differences," Chandler says. "Particularly with eggshell and semi-gloss finishes, the drywall joints seem to telegraph through the sealers, especially when they are subject to high light reflectance. Only by using Sheetrock First Coat are we able to eliminate those differences."

Rick Miller agrees. "We had a home on a waterfront setting which had 30-ft. high walls in one room with lots of windows picking up a tremendous amount of light.

"To ensure the highest quality finished look possible, we skim-coated that area. But on other walls in the home, we used First Coat primer.

"In the end, there were no detectable differences between the walls we skimmed out and the First Coat walls. It was very impressive — the primer gave us virtually the same results as skim coating."

Miller typically spray applies the equalizing primer. "After application, we inspect our work with the owner, do our touch-up with tinted mud, sand the tinted mud areas so they are feathered out, and re-apply the primer by roller over those areas. Then we sand the walls completely. Finally, we clean up and turn the job over to the painter."

Porosity variation

Next to texture variation, the most preventable and most common cause of non uniformity results from porosity variations between joint compound and drywall.

If the composite surface is left untreated, the finish paint will be

absorbed into the treated joints and gypsum panel paper at different rates. This results in a classic case of "joint banding" or "photographing," as the joint becomes graphically visible through the decorative finish.

The joint can appear lighter or darker than the surrounding gypsum panel field areas, depending on whether the treated joint is more or less porous than the drywall face paper.

When the joint compound is more porous, a condition known as "white banding" occurs, and the joint area will take on a lighter sheen than the surrounding gypsum panels.

The white banding is generally accentuated by hot, dry weather conditions and when damp or wet gypsum panels are used.

Conversely, when the gypsum panel surface is more porous than the joint compound, "dark banding" occurs. Paint applied over this type of surface will be absorbed at a greater rate over the face paper, making the joint appear darker.

Extended, slow drying conditions or painting over wet joint compound are the most common causes of dark banding.

Both of these conditions can be prevented by first making sure that the entire surface — treated joints and drywall panels — are thoroughly dry prior to finishing.

Allow each layer of joint compound dry completely before applying the subsequent coat.

Also, be sure to apply a preparatory (prime) first coat as recommended by the drywall manufacturer.

Sealers, which seal the entire surface thereby equalizing moisture porosity rates, are best for correcting porosity-related problems, but typically do not correct texture variations of the substrate.

Primers, on the other hand, generally help correct texture differences, but do not equalize porosity.

Another option is to skim coat the entire wall surface using joint compound. If a skim coat is applied, the use of a sealer prior to painting is recommended for optimal results.

"Customers never understand why they see the seams in the drywall when it has two or three coats of paint," noted Don Steadman, owner of All-Tech Decorating Co., in Chicago Ridge, Illinois.



Mike Chandler (left) and Chris Chandler, of Modern Decorating, Inc., begin unloading materials for a drywall priming project at a commercial office building in Richmond, Virginia. Modern Decorating is a family-operated business, based in Richmond.

"With new drywall, it's really hard to disguise that problem, especially when you're using eggshell or semi-gloss finish coats. Normal PVA-type primers won't hide it entirely. Skim coating is an option, but it gets expensive. The only solution we have found is to use an equalizing primer, such as the U.S. Gypsum Sheetrock First Coat product. It really evens out the sheen differences."

Pat Giordano, of American Painting & Refinishing, Montrose, New York, puts it another way. "Applying a primer to equalize both the porosity and texture differences is the logical completion of a drywall installation. That's how we think of it."

Color variation

Even a smooth, flat surface void of deformations can appear non-uniform due to color variation over the decorated surface.

Color variation has several causes, among them translucency, a condition