NEW BRUNSWICK PAINTING

Surface Preparation

Surface prep, priming, sanding, scraping, caulking, patching, cleaning, and repair before painting

21 Expert Answers from Paint IQ

newbrunswickpainting.com/construction-brain

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Q1

How do I properly sand and feather the edges of a drywall patch so it disappears under paint in a Fredericton home?

Proper feathering is the difference between a patch that disappears completely and one that shows through every coat of paint. The key is creating a gradual transition from the patch compound to the existing wall surface using progressively finer grits and wider sanding patterns.

Start with the right tools for your Fredericton home's drywall work. You'll need 120-grit, 220-grit, and 320-grit sandpaper, a sanding block or electric palm sander, a shop vacuum or tack cloth, and good lighting (a work light held at an angle to the wall reveals imperfections). Wear a dust mask — drywall dust is fine and irritating, especially in older Fredericton homes that may have multiple layers of compound from previous repairs.

Begin sanding with 120-grit paper to knock down any high spots and ridges in your dried compound. Don't sand aggressively — you're smoothing, not removing material. Focus on the edges where your compound meets the existing wall. The goal is to eliminate any raised lip or ridge that would catch paint and create a visible line.

The feathering technique is critical for invisible repairs. Switch to 220-grit and sand in a circular motion, working from the center of the patch outward. Extend your sanding pattern 6-8 inches beyond the edges of your compound in all directions. This creates a gradual transition zone where the compound thickness tapers from full depth at the patch center to paper-thin at the outer edges. The wider this transition zone, the better your patch will disappear under paint.

Check your work frequently by running your hand lightly over the area — you should feel no ridges, bumps, or sudden transitions. Hold a work light at a low angle to the wall to cast shadows that reveal any imperfections. In Fredericton's older homes with textured walls, pay attention to matching the surrounding texture pattern during your final sanding.

Finish with 320-grit paper for the smoothest possible surface, especially important if you're using eggshell or satin paint that will highlight imperfections. Vacuum all dust thoroughly and wipe with a tack cloth before priming. Even perfectly sanded patches need primer — bare compound is porous and will absorb paint differently than the surrounding painted wall, creating a visible "flash" or sheen difference without proper priming.

Prime the entire patched area with a high-quality drywall primer like Zinsser Bulls Eye 1-2-3 or Benjamin Moore Fresh Start. Don't just spot-prime the compound — prime from feathered edge to feathered edge to ensure uniform paint absorption. In Fredericton's dry winter air (ideal for drywall work), primer typically dries in 2-4 hours.

When to hire a professional: Large patches over 12 inches, multiple patches throughout a room, or patches on textured walls often benefit from professional attention. Experienced drywall contractors have spray texture

equipment and techniques that are difficult to match as a DIYer, especially in older Fredericton homes with unique plaster textures.

Q2

What is the correct way to spot-prime repaired areas so the patch blends invisibly with surrounding paint on interior walls in a Moncton home?

Spot-priming repaired areas correctly is essential for invisible blending — without proper priming, patches will show through as dull spots or colour variations even after topcoating. The key is using the right primer for your specific repair and applying it with the same texture as the surrounding wall.

Start with the right primer selection. For small nail holes filled with spackling compound, use a high-quality latex primer like Benjamin Moore Fresh Start or Sherwin-Williams ProBlock. For larger drywall repairs where you've applied joint compound, use a PVA (polyvinyl acetate) primer specifically designed for new drywall — joint compound is highly porous and will absorb paint unevenly without proper sealing. If you're covering stains, crayon marks, or marker, use a stain-blocking primer like Zinsser Bulls Eye 1-2-3 or Kilz Premium.

Match your application method to the existing wall texture. This is where most homeowners go wrong — they brush primer onto a repair in a smooth wall that was originally rolled. If the surrounding wall has a light orange-peel texture from rolling, apply your primer with a small roller using the same nap that was used originally (typically 10mm/3/8 inch for most interior walls). For smooth walls that were brushed or sprayed, apply primer with a high-quality brush using light, feathering strokes. The primer texture must match the wall texture, or the repair will be visible even under topcoat.

Timing and technique matter significantly in Moncton's variable humidity. During winter heating season when indoor humidity drops below 30%, primer will dry quickly and you can topcoat within 2-4 hours. In summer without air conditioning, when humidity reaches 60-70% in many Moncton homes, extend drying time to 4-6 hours before topcoating. Apply primer in thin, even coats — thick primer application creates a different surface texture that telegraphs through the topcoat.

For larger repairs involving multiple coats of joint compound, prime the entire repaired area plus 6 inches beyond the repair edges. Joint compound creates a slightly different surface texture than painted drywall, so feathering your primer beyond the repair boundaries helps blend the transition. Use a brush to cut in the edges of your primer area, then roll the center section with the same roller technique used on the original wall.

The final topcoat application is equally critical. Once your primer is fully dry, apply your finish paint using the exact same application method as the surrounding wall. If possible, use paint from the same batch as the original wall — even the same colour mixed months apart can have slight variations. Apply the topcoat slightly beyond your primed area to further blend the repair. In most cases, you'll need to paint the entire wall from corner to corner to achieve truly invisible results, especially under angled lighting or with darker colours.

When to hire a professional: For extensive wall damage, multiple large repairs, or when working with specialty finishes like knockdown texture common in newer Moncton homes, a professional painter has the spray equipment and experience to match textures perfectly. Also consider professional help if you're dealing with older plaster walls common in Moncton's heritage areas — plaster repairs require different primers and techniques than modern drywall.

Q3

How do I prepare and seal smoke-damaged walls and ceilings with an odour-blocking primer before repainting a home in New Brunswick?

Smoke damage requires thorough cleaning followed by a shellac-based primer like Zinsser BIN or Kilz Original to permanently block odors and stains before repainting. Without proper sealing, smoke residue will bleed through regular paint and the smell will return within weeks.

Cleaning the Smoke Damage

Start with thorough cleaning using TSP (trisodium phosphate) or a heavy-duty degreaser mixed according to package directions. Smoke leaves an oily, sticky residue that regular soap won't remove. Work from top to bottom — ceilings first, then walls. Use a sponge or cloth, changing your cleaning solution frequently as it becomes dirty. Pay special attention to areas around light fixtures, ceiling fans, and corners where smoke residue concentrates. For heavy smoke damage, you may need to clean surfaces twice. Allow everything to dry completely — this is especially important in New Brunswick's humid climate where moisture can interfere with primer adhesion.

Remove any peeling or loose paint with a scraper, then sand glossy surfaces lightly to give the primer something to grip. **Never dry-sand smoke-damaged surfaces without a P100 respirator** — smoke residue often contains toxic particles, and homes built before 1978 in New Brunswick commonly have lead paint underneath that could be disturbed.

Choosing the Right Primer

Regular latex primers will NOT block smoke odors or stains. You need a **shellac-based primer** like Zinsser BIN ($45-65/gallon in NB) or an oil-based primer like Kilz Original. Zinsser BIN is the gold standard for smoke damage — it dries in 45 minutes, blocks virtually all odors and stains, and can be topcoated with any paint. The downside is strong alcohol fumes during application, so ventilation is critical.

For severe smoke damage (house fires, heavy long-term smoking), consider Zinsser Cover Stain or Kilz Restoration — these are specifically formulated for extreme odor and stain blocking. They cost more ($55-75/gallon) but provide maximum protection against bleed-through.

Application Process

Ventilation is absolutely critical — open all windows, use fans, and wear a respirator during application. Shellac-based primers have strong fumes that can be overwhelming in enclosed spaces. In New Brunswick's winter months when you can't open windows, consider renting an air scrubber or postponing the work until spring.

Apply the primer with a high-quality brush or roller — cheap applicators will leave marks that show through your finish coat. Work in manageable sections, maintaining a wet edge to avoid lap marks. Don't try to cover everything in one thick coat — two thin coats of primer provide better coverage and odor blocking than one heavy coat. Allow the first coat to dry completely (usually 2-4 hours depending on humidity) before applying the second coat.

Pay special attention to porous surfaces like drywall, wood trim, and textured ceilings — these absorb more smoke residue and may need extra primer coats. Smooth surfaces like painted trim may only need one coat if the cleaning was thorough.

Final Steps and Topcoating

After the primer has cured (24 hours minimum), you can apply your finish paint. Use high-quality interior paint — the primer does the heavy lifting for odor blocking, but good topcoat paint provides washability and durability. For areas that were heavily smoke-damaged, consider using a paint with additional stain-blocking properties like Benjamin Moore Regal Select or Sherwin-Williams Duration Home.

When to Call a Professional

For extensive smoke damage from house fires, hire a professional restoration company that specializes in smoke remediation. They have industrial equipment for cleaning, ozone generators for odor removal, and experience with insurance claims. For moderate damage from years of smoking, a professional painter experienced with smoke damage can ensure proper primer application and ventilation safety. **Never attempt this work yourself if you have respiratory issues** — the cleaning chemicals and primer fumes can be harsh even with proper ventilation.

Need help finding a professional painter experienced with smoke damage restoration? New Brunswick Painting can match you with contractors who specialize in this challenging work.

Q4

How do I use an oxalic acid wood brightener to restore weathered grey cedar siding before repainting a New Brunswick home?

Oxalic acid wood brightener is an excellent choice for restoring weathered grey cedar siding in New Brunswick before repainting. This chemical treatment neutralizes the grey tannins and UV damage that make cedar look aged and weathered, returning it to a fresh, natural wood tone that accepts primer and paint beautifully.

Understanding Cedar Weathering in NB Cedar siding on New Brunswick homes turns grey due to UV exposure, tannin oxidation, and moisture cycles from our Maritime climate. The grey surface layer is essentially dead wood fiber mixed with oxidized tannins. Simply pressure washing removes some surface dirt but leaves the grey tannins embedded in the wood grain. Oxalic acid (wood bleach) chemically breaks down these tannins and brightens the wood to its original colour, creating an ideal surface for primer adhesion.

Application Process Mix oxalic acid crystals with water according to manufacturer directions — typically 1 pound of crystals per gallon of water. Always add crystals to water, never water to crystals, to prevent violent reactions. Wear rubber gloves, eye protection, and old clothes as oxalic acid will bleach fabric and can irritate skin. Apply the solution with a pump sprayer, brush, or roller, working from bottom to top to prevent streaking. The wood will begin brightening within minutes — you'll see the grey fade to natural cedar tones. Allow the solution to work for 10-15 minutes, then scrub lightly with a stiff brush to help lift stubborn grey areas.

Critical NB Timing Considerations In New Brunswick's climate, timing is everything. Apply oxalic acid only during dry weather with at least 48 hours of no rain forecast. The wood must be completely dry before treatment — never apply to damp cedar as it dilutes the solution and prevents proper penetration. Late spring through early fall is ideal, but avoid the hottest summer days when the solution dries too quickly. After treatment, rinse thoroughly with clean water and allow 2-3 days of dry weather for the wood to fully dry before priming. Test the wood moisture content with a moisture meter — it must be below 15% before applying primer.

Post-Treatment Steps After oxalic acid treatment and thorough rinsing, the cedar will be clean and bright but also more porous and vulnerable to moisture. You have a limited window — typically 2-4 weeks in NB conditions — to apply primer before the wood begins weathering again. Use a high-quality exterior primer specifically designed for cedar, such as an oil-based or shellac-based stain-blocking primer. These primers seal the wood and prevent tannin bleed-through that can discolor your topcoat paint.

When to Hire a Professional While oxalic acid treatment is manageable for single-storey cedar siding, consider hiring a professional for two-storey homes or large areas. Professional painters have the equipment to apply the solution evenly at height, experience managing the timing between treatment and priming, and access to commercial-grade products. They can also assess whether your cedar needs additional repairs or caulking before

the brightening process. For homes with extensive cedar trim, complex rooflines, or mixed siding materials, professional application ensures consistent results and proper safety protocols when working with chemicals at height.

Need help finding a professional painter experienced with cedar restoration? New Brunswick Painting can match you with contractors who specialize in preparing and painting cedar siding for our Maritime climate.

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Q5

How do I use a moisture meter to check if exterior wood siding on my Fredericton home is dry enough to paint after prolonged Maritime rain?

A moisture meter is essential for exterior painting in New Brunswick — wood siding must be below 15% moisture content before painting, or the new paint will fail within a year due to moisture pushing out from behind.

Moisture meters are inexpensive tools ($30-80 at Canadian Tire, Home Depot, or local hardware stores) that can save you thousands in premature paint failure. In Fredericton's climate, with heavy spring rains and high summer humidity, checking wood moisture before exterior painting isn't optional — it's mandatory for a lasting paint job.

Pin-type moisture meters are most accurate for wood siding. These have two metal pins that you push into the wood surface to measure moisture content as a percentage. Look for a meter that reads 6-30% moisture — anything above 15% means the wood is too wet to paint. Digital models with large displays are easier to read and typically more accurate than analog needle versions.

Testing technique matters significantly. Check multiple spots on each wall, focusing on areas that stay wet longest — north-facing walls, areas under roof lines where water runs off, bottom courses of siding near the foundation, and any wood that looks darker or stained. Push the pins about 1/4 inch into the wood, perpendicular to the grain. Take readings at different times of day, as morning dew can give false high readings even on relatively dry wood.

In Fredericton's spring conditions (April through mid-May), wood siding commonly reads 18-25% moisture content even days after rain stops. **Cedar and pine siding popular in older Fredericton neighborhoods can hold moisture for 5-7 days after heavy rain**, especially on shaded north and east-facing walls. Pressure-treated lumber holds moisture even longer. Never trust visual inspection alone — wood can look dry on the surface while still being saturated underneath.

Wait for consistent readings below 15% on all test areas before starting your exterior painting project. In Fredericton's typical spring weather, this often means waiting 3-5 sunny, breezy days after the last significant rainfall. Summer readings are generally more reliable, but even then, check after morning dew has completely evaporated.

Professional painters in the Fredericton area always use moisture meters before starting exterior projects — it's standard practice because Maritime humidity makes visual assessment unreliable. If you're hiring a painter and they don't mention checking wood moisture content, that's a red flag about their experience with NB's climate conditions.

For a full exterior painting project on your Fredericton home, invest in a quality moisture meter and take the time to test properly. The $50 tool cost is nothing compared to watching your new paint job peel and fail because you painted over wet wood.

Need help finding a professional painter who understands moisture testing and NB's challenging exterior painting conditions? New Brunswick Painting can match you with experienced local contractors through the New Brunswick Construction Network.

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Q6

What is trisodium phosphate (TSP) and when should I use it to clean exterior siding instead of plain soap and water before painting in NB?

Trisodium phosphate (TSP) is a heavy-duty alkaline cleaner that's significantly more effective than soap and water for removing stubborn contaminants from exterior siding before painting. In New Brunswick's humid Maritime climate, where mildew, algae, and salt residue are common problems, TSP often makes the difference between paint that lasts 8-10 years versus paint that starts failing within 2-3 years.

What TSP Does That Soap Can't

TSP is a powerful degreasing and etching agent that breaks down organic growth, removes oxidation, and creates microscopic surface texture that helps paint adhere. Regular dish soap or house wash detergents can't match TSP's ability to neutralize mildew, remove chalky paint residue, or cut through the film of salt spray that accumulates on siding in coastal NB communities like Saint John, Shediac, or Bathurst. TSP also brightens weathered wood siding and removes the gray oxidation layer that prevents proper paint adhesion.

When to Use TSP on NB Exterior Siding

Use TSP instead of soap when your siding shows **mildew or algae growth** — those black, green, or gray streaks common on north-facing walls and under roof lines in NB's humid summers. TSP kills the organic growth and removes the root structure, while soap just washes off the surface layer. You'll also want TSP for **chalky or oxidized surfaces** — if you run your hand across the siding and get white or colored powder on your palm, that's paint oxidation that soap won't remove but TSP will neutralize.

Salt spray exposure is another key indicator. Homes within 5 kilometers of the Bay of Fundy, Northumberland Strait, or any saltwater coastline accumulate an invisible film of salt that interferes with paint adhesion. TSP removes this salt residue completely, while soap and water often leave traces behind. If you're painting **cedar siding or shingles**, TSP removes the natural tannins and extractives that can bleed through paint, especially important on the cedar-sided homes common throughout NB.

How to Use TSP Safely

Mix TSP at a ratio of 1/2 cup per gallon of warm water — stronger solutions can damage plants and etch certain siding materials. Always wear rubber gloves, eye protection, and old clothes, as TSP is caustic and can cause skin irritation. Apply with a pump sprayer or soft brush, let it sit for 10-15 minutes to work, then scrub lightly and rinse thoroughly with clean water. The key is complete rinsing — any TSP residue left on the surface will interfere with paint adhesion.

Protect your landscaping by wetting down plants before cleaning and rinsing them thoroughly afterward. TSP can burn vegetation, so cover delicate shrubs with plastic sheeting. Never use TSP on aluminum siding, as it can cause permanent etching and discoloration.

Environmental and Seasonal Considerations

TSP contains phosphates that can contribute to algae growth in waterways, so it's banned in some provinces — but it's still legal and available in New Brunswick. Use it responsibly by avoiding runoff into storm drains or waterways. The best time for TSP cleaning in NB is late spring through early fall when temperatures are above 15°C and you have several dry days for proper drying before painting.

When Soap and Water Is Sufficient

For routine maintenance cleaning of relatively clean siding, or for vinyl and aluminum siding in good condition, a quality house wash detergent mixed with water is often adequate. Save TSP for problem surfaces where soap has failed to remove stubborn contaminants.

Need help finding a professional painter who understands proper surface preparation? New Brunswick Painting can match you with experienced contractors who know when and how to use TSP safely for optimal paint adhesion in our Maritime climate.

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Q7

Do I always need to use primer before painting walls in my New Brunswick home?

Not always — but skipping primer on the wrong surfaces is the single most common cause of painting failures, and in New Brunswick's older housing stock, priming is necessary far more often than many homeowners expect.

There are genuine situations where you can skip a separate primer coat. If you're repainting a wall that's already in good condition — the existing paint is adhering well, the surface is clean, the colour change is subtle (say, a medium grey over a similar shade of beige), and you're using a high-quality self-priming paint — you can often get away with two coats of topcoat alone. Most premium paints like Benjamin Moore Regal Select, Sherwin-Williams Duration, and Dulux Diamond are formulated with good hide and adhesion built in. On a previously painted, problem-free wall, they can work without a separate primer step.

However, primer is not optional in these situations:

You absolutely need primer on **bare or new drywall**. The paper facing on new drywall is porous and absorbent — paint soaks in unevenly and the finish looks flat and blotchy, a condition called flashing. A PVA drywall primer seals the paper and gives you a uniform surface. Many older NB homes in Fredericton and Moncton were skimmed with compound during renovations, exposing raw drywall — always prime these patches before painting.

Primer is also essential when painting over **raw or bare wood** (trim, doors, baseboards), **significant colour changes** (going from a dark red to a light grey), **stained or water-damaged areas**, **nicotine or smoke-stained walls**, **new plaster or joint compound patches**, and any surface that has been sanded down to bare material. In each of these cases, skipping primer leads to poor adhesion, uneven colour, stains bleeding through, or a finish that peels within a year.

NB-specific consideration: Many homes built before 1970 in Saint John, Fredericton, and Moncton have original plaster walls. Old plaster is highly alkaline, especially if it's never been painted or has been repainted many times without a proper primer between cycles. High-alkalinity surfaces saponify latex paint — essentially turning it into soap from the inside, causing the film to soften and peel. Use a quality alkali-resistant primer on old plaster before any latex topcoat.

The practical approach: prime whenever there's any doubt, especially if you're doing walls in an older home, changing colour significantly, or painting over any repaired areas. A gallon of primer costs 5-50 and takes maybe an extra hour to apply. The alternative — peeling, blotchy, or failing paint that you have to redo in a year — is far more expensive and frustrating.

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Q8

How do I prepare walls for painting in an older Moncton home with plaster walls and cracks?

Plaster walls in older Moncton homes can be beautifully smooth and durable when properly repaired, but they require more thoughtful preparation than modern drywall — especially when hairline cracks and impact damage have built up over decades. The good news is that patient prep work produces a surface that takes paint exceptionally well.

Most older Moncton and Fredericton homes built before 1960 have three-coat plaster over wood lath, while homes from the 1960s and 70s may have two-coat plaster over gypsum board. Understanding what you have matters: wood lath plaster has more flex and movement, which is why you see long diagonal cracks at window and door corners — those are stress cracks, not structural problems, but they will come back if you fill them with a rigid filler.

For hairline cracks, a paintable latex caulk or a flexible spackling compound works better than traditional plaster or rigid joint compound. Apply it into the crack with a putty knife, feather the edges out 2-3 inches on each side, let it dry completely, and sand smooth with 120-grit. For wider cracks (3mm or more), open the crack slightly with a utility knife to give the filler a key — a V-groove holds filler better than a tight crack. Fill in layers no thicker than 3-4mm per coat, letting each coat dry fully, then sand level.

If you have loose or hollow plaster (tap gently — a hollow sound means the plaster has separated from the lath), use plaster washers and screws to re-anchor it before filling. **Never paint over loose plaster** — it will continue moving and pop your new paint off in sheets.

Pre-1978 homes in Moncton and Saint John frequently have lead paint, often under multiple layers of latex. If you're sanding plaster walls, do a lead test with a swab kit from your hardware store before generating dust. If lead is present, wet-sand only, contain the work area with plastic sheeting, wear an N100 respirator, and dispose of the dust as hazardous waste.

Once repairs are done and the wall is sanded smooth, **prime before painting** — this is non-negotiable on repaired plaster. A coat of PVA drywall primer or a quality latex primer-sealer ($40-60/gallon) seals the surface and gives a uniform base.

Expect to pay **$400-700 per room** for a professional painter to repair and repaint plaster walls in an older NB home, though rooms with significant crack repair or lead paint precautions can run higher.

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Q9

What is the best way to fill nail holes and small cracks before painting interior walls in NB?

Lightweight spackling compound is the go-to product for nail holes and small cracks in interior walls, applied in thin layers, sanded smooth, and primed before painting — and the process takes 10 minutes per wall if you do it right.

For a standard nail hole in drywall — the kind left from a picture frame or shelf bracket — a finger-applied dab of lightweight spackle (brands like Polyfilla or DAP Lightweight Spackling, available at any NB hardware store for around -12 per tub) is all you need. Press it in firmly, wipe flush with a wet finger or a putty knife, and let it dry completely. Lightweight spackle dries faster than traditional fillers, often within 30-60 minutes, and it shrinks very

little. Don't overfill — build flush with the wall surface on the first application rather than overfilling and sanding back, which creates a halo of sanding dust you'll need to prime carefully.

For small cracks in drywall (hairline to about 3mm wide), the same lightweight spackle works well. For cracks 3-6mm wide or longer than about 15 cm, use a ready-mixed joint compound (sometimes called mud) and embed a strip of fibreglass mesh tape before applying the compound. The tape bridges the crack and prevents it from re-opening as the compound dries and as the wall moves seasonally — something that definitely happens in NB homes that go from dry winter heat to humid summer interiors.

Plaster walls in older Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John homes need a slightly different approach. Plaster is more porous than drywall and sucks moisture out of fillers fast, causing premature drying, shrinkage, and cracking of the patch. Dampen the crack lightly with a wet sponge before applying any filler — this slows the moisture absorption and gives the compound time to properly bond. For deeper or wider plaster cracks, a setting-type compound like Durabond 20 or 45 (which chemically hardens rather than air-dries) gives a harder, more durable repair that matches the surrounding plaster better.

Sanding and priming are non-negotiable steps that many DIYers rush or skip. Once dry, sand the patch smooth with 120-grit sandpaper, then follow with 180-grit for a fine finish. Wipe away all sanding dust with a slightly damp cloth. Then — and this is critical — spot-prime every patched area before applying your finish coat. Spackling and joint compound are very porous and absorb paint unevenly, creating dull, flat patches called flashing that show through even a second coat of premium paint. A spot of PVA primer on each repair, allowed to dry, eliminates this problem completely.

A good putty knife set (4-inch and 6-inch), a tub of lightweight spackle, a pack of mixed-grit sandpaper, and a small roller of PVA primer — total cost under 0 at any NB hardware store — will handle the prep work in most rooms effectively. For walls with extensive patching needs or old plaster requiring more significant repair, a professional drywall finisher will deliver a far smoother result than most DIYers can achieve.

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Q10

How do I prepare a previously glossy surface for repainting without sanding everything by hand?

Liquid deglosser (also called liquid sandpaper) lets you chemically etch a glossy surface for repainting without hand-sanding every square centimetre — it's a significant time-saver on trim, doors, and kitchen walls with a semi-gloss or gloss finish.

Glossy surfaces — semi-gloss or gloss trim, old oil-based painted walls, bathroom tiles, or any surface with a hard sheen — need to be dulled before new paint will adhere properly. Fresh paint doesn't chemically bond to a slick surface; it needs microscopic tooth to grip. The traditional method is sanding with 120-150 grit sandpaper, which works well but is tedious and dusty, especially on moulded trim profiles, stair railings, and spindles where you can't easily run a sanding block.

Liquid deglosser (Wilbond, Klean-Strip Easy Liquid Sandpaper, or the Dulux/Benjamin Moore equivalent) is an alcohol and solvent-based product that you wipe onto the glossy surface with a cloth. It chemically etches the surface, dulling the sheen and creating microscopic bite for the new paint to adhere to. Application is fast — wipe on, wait 5-10 minutes as the surface dulls visibly, then paint. It's particularly useful on **trim, doors, baseboards, and window frames** — the kinds of surfaces that are tedious to sand by hand and where you're working with tight angles and profiles.

How to use liquid deglosser properly in an NB home:

Wear nitrile gloves and work in a ventilated space — liquid deglosser has a strong solvent smell. Wipe it onto the glossy surface with a lint-free cloth, covering the entire area you plan to repaint. You'll see the sheen disappear as it works. Don't over-saturate — a thin, even wipe is all that's needed. Let it dry to a chalky matte finish (usually 5-15 minutes depending on temperature and humidity — in a cold NB basement or garage in spring, give it a bit longer), then apply your primer or paint within a few hours. Don't let it sit too long before painting, as the chemical etch fades and the surface can become glossy again.

Important limitations: Liquid deglosser works well on previously painted glossy surfaces in good condition. It does **not** replace sanding on surfaces that are peeling, chipping, or have loose paint — those areas need mechanical prep first. It's also less effective on very thick, hard oil-based gloss paints common on older NB trim from the 1960s-80s; those may still need light scuff-sanding before the deglosser application for best adhesion. A light once-over with 150-grit sandpaper on problem areas followed by deglosser on the larger flat surfaces is often the best hybrid approach.

For a whole-house trim repaint on an older NB home — baseboards, door casings, window frames, all the woodwork — combining liquid deglosser on the flat sections with light hand-sanding on the profiled edges is efficient and effective. A professional painter will typically take this approach on interior repaint projects where existing trim is in good shape but just needs freshening. If you're doing it yourself, budget about 30-45 minutes per room for deglosser prep on average trim quantities.

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Q11

What should I use to clean walls before painting in a kitchen that has years of grease buildup?

A kitchen with years of cooking grease on the walls needs TSP (trisodium phosphate) or a heavy-duty degreaser before any paint will stick — regular dish soap and water simply does not remove the fine oil film that coats kitchen surfaces and causes new paint to peel or crawl.

Cooking grease is invisible as a uniform film but very much present on every kitchen surface near the stove, on cabinet faces, and across walls up to a metre from the cooking area. Over years, it builds into a sticky, tacky layer that new paint cannot bond to properly. You might not feel it with your fingers, but run your palm along an unpainted kitchen wall and smell it — that slightly greasy, food smell tells you the surface is contaminated. Painting over it without cleaning means your new paint job starts failing within a year.

TSP (trisodium phosphate) is the professional painter's standard for kitchen cleaning before repainting. It's a powder you mix with warm water — typically 2-4 tablespoons per 4 litres — and apply with a sponge, scrubbing the surface firmly. TSP is alkaline and cuts through grease, oil, and accumulated cooking residue thoroughly. It's available at paint stores and hardware stores across NB for a few dollars per box. **Wear rubber gloves and eye**

protection — TSP is caustic. After cleaning, rinse the walls with clean water and let them dry completely before priming. Traditional TSP requires careful rinsing; some TSP-substitute products (Savogran TSP-PF, or similar) are phosphate-free and skip the rinsing step, though many painters still prefer the rinsing routine to be sure.

If TSP feels like overkill for a lightly greasy kitchen, a dedicated degreaser like Krud Kutter, Simple Green, or a commercial sugar soap product (popular in NB and across Canada for pre-paint cleaning) works very well. Mix according to directions, apply with a sponge or cloth, scrub, and rinse. Sugar soap is gentle enough to use without gloves for most people but effective enough for moderate kitchen grime.

Focus your cleaning effort strategically. The zone within about a metre of the stove — both the wall behind it and the adjacent wall sections — will have the heaviest grease accumulation. Cabinets above the stove and the range hood area are also heavily contaminated. The far side of the kitchen near the sink or dining area may only need a lighter cleaning pass. Adapting your effort to where the contamination actually is saves time without cutting corners.

Once cleaned and dry, apply a coat of primer before your finish paint — even if you're repainting in the same colour. Grease-contaminated walls, even after cleaning, benefit from a bonding primer or an oil-based primer like Zinsser Bulls Eye 1-2-3, which gives an extra layer of adhesion insurance. For NB kitchens that see heavy cooking use, finish with a satin or semi-gloss paint — these sheens resist moisture and grease and can be wiped down repeatedly without losing their finish, unlike flat or eggshell paints.

For a seriously neglected kitchen — a rental property that wasn't cleaned between tenants, or a home where someone cooked heavily for 20+ years without cleaning the walls — professional cleaning and painting is worth every dollar. The prep work on those surfaces is genuinely labour-intensive and getting it wrong means an expensive redo.

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Q12

How do I deal with peeling paint on drywall before repainting in my Fredericton home?

Peeling paint on drywall is almost always caused by a moisture or adhesion problem — and you have to identify and fix the root cause before repainting, otherwise the new paint will peel in exactly the same way within a season or two.

The first question to ask is *why* the paint is peeling. In Fredericton homes, the most common culprits are bathroom moisture penetrating through walls (peeling in the bathroom itself or on the other side of a shared wall), condensation on cold exterior walls in winter, a previous paint job applied over a dirty or glossy surface without proper prep, or paint that was applied over a wet or damp surface in the first place — a mistake that happens more often than you'd think when homeowners or inexperienced painters rush a renovation. Identifying the cause guides the repair: fix moisture intrusion before repainting, or improve surface prep to address an adhesion failure.

Once the root cause is handled, here's the proper repair sequence for peeling paint on drywall:

Remove all loose paint first. Use a broad putty knife or a scraper to lift and remove every flap, bubble, and loose edge. Don't try to paint over the edges of peeling areas — the new paint will just lift the edges further. Scrape back until you reach paint that's firmly bonded to the drywall. If the peeling is extensive, you may be scraping a significant area — that's fine. You need to know the full extent of the problem.

Feathering the edges is the step most DIYers skip and then wonder why the repainted area looks uneven. Where you've scraped back to solid paint, there's now a visible ridge — the thickness of the old paint layer. Sand that ridge with 120-grit sandpaper in a feathering motion, tapering the edge gradually from the raised paint level down to the bare drywall surface. This prevents a visible halo in the finished repaint.

Skim coat bare drywall areas with joint compound. Where scraping has exposed the raw drywall paper, apply a thin skim of lightweight joint compound, feathered out beyond the repair area. Sand smooth with 180-grit once dry. In a Fredericton winter, joint compound in a heated room dries in 3-4 hours; in a damp spring or summer interior, give it overnight. Never rush this step.

Spot-prime every repaired area with a PVA primer or a shellac-based stain blocker if there's any water staining or discolouration. Raw drywall paper and joint compound absorb paint unevenly and cause visible dull patches (flashing) in the finish coat. One coat of primer on the repairs, fully dry, eliminates this.

Then repaint with two coats of your chosen finish paint. For a bathroom or any moisture-prone area in a Fredericton home — where January temperatures outside can hit -20°C while a hot shower generates steam inside — use a kitchen and bath paint formulated with mildewcide, and ensure your bathroom ventilation fan is actually working and

vented to the exterior, not just to the attic or wall cavity.

For minor peeling limited to one wall or a small area, this is a manageable DIY repair. For widespread peeling throughout a room, or peeling accompanied by soft or crumbling drywall (a sign of serious moisture damage), bring in a professional to assess the moisture situation before investing in a repaint.

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Q13

What type of primer should I use on new drywall before painting in a New Brunswick home?

For new drywall, use a PVA drywall primer — it's specifically formulated to seal the porous paper face and the absorbent compound used to finish joints and screw holes. Skipping this step on fresh drywall is one of the most common and costly mistakes homeowners make.

New drywall has two very different surfaces: the paper-faced gypsum board itself, and the joint compound applied over seams and fasteners. These two surfaces absorb paint at completely different rates. Without a proper primer, you'll end up with what painters call "flashing" — dull, uneven patches that show exactly where every joint and screw hole is, no matter how many coats of finish paint you apply. A PVA (polyvinyl acetate) drywall primer seals both surfaces uniformly so your finish coat goes on evenly.

PVA drywall primer is inexpensive and widely available across New Brunswick — expect to pay around 0-45 for a 3.78-litre can at paint stores in Moncton, Fredericton, or Saint John. One coat is typically all you need, applied with a 10mm (3/8-inch) roller for walls and a brush to cut in the edges. It dries in about an hour in normal conditions. After it dries, lightly sand with 220-grit paper to knock down any raised fibres in the drywall paper or roughness in the compound, then apply your finish colour.

In New Brunswick's winter heating season, new drywall priming is actually easiest. Forced-air heating keeps indoor humidity low — often between 25-35% — which means the PVA primer dries quickly and the compound sets firm. If you're priming in summer without air conditioning, indoor humidity can climb to 60-70%, which slows drying noticeably. Run a fan and give the primer extra time to dry fully before sanding or applying finish coats.

A few practical tips: always prime new drywall before applying any colour — even if you plan to use a paint-and-primer-in-one product, a dedicated PVA primer is still the better choice for bare drywall. If your drywall finisher did a great job with very smooth compound work, you can prime and paint in the same visit. If the compound is rough or there are ridges at the joints, prime first, sand smooth, then paint. And never use regular latex wall paint as a "primer" on new drywall — it raises the paper grain and doesn't seal uniformly enough.

For a professional-quality finish, the extra 0-45 spent on proper PVA primer saves you from repeatedly repainting disappointing results. If you're tackling a whole-house drywall project or a significant renovation, this is absolutely a job where proper prep pays off visibly every single day you live in the space.

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Q14

How do I prepare exterior wood siding for repainting when the old paint is peeling badly in NB?

Badly peeling exterior wood siding requires thorough and patient preparation — this is 80% of the entire job, and skipping or rushing any step guarantees the new paint will fail in 2-3 NB winters. Done correctly, a full exterior repaint with proper prep lasts 8-12 years on quality NB housing stock.

Start by identifying **why the paint is peeling.** On most New Brunswick homes — particularly older clapboard siding common in Moncton, Saint John, and Fredericton — peeling comes from moisture migrating outward from inside the wall, failed caulking letting water behind the siding, or paint applied over dirty, wet, or glossy surfaces. Fix the root cause first, or the new paint will peel for the same reason.

The preparation sequence is: **wash, then scrape, then sand, then repair, then prime, then paint.** Begin with a thorough pressure wash — 1,500-2,500 PSI is appropriate for wood siding. Let the siding dry completely — in New Brunswick's spring and early summer, that can mean 3-5 dry days. **Check wood moisture content with a moisture meter before you prime or paint — wood must be below 15%.**

Once dry, scrape all loose and peeling paint back to a firm edge. Use a stiff-blade scraper on flat sections, a detail scraper around trim. You do NOT need to strip to bare wood everywhere — just remove everything loose. Feather the edges of remaining paint with 80-grit sandpaper.

Fill all nail holes and open joints with paintable exterior caulk, and re-caulk all seams — around window and door frames, at corners, and any gaps where siding meets trim. This step alone prevents most of the moisture infiltration that causes NB siding to peel.

Prime all bare wood and scraped areas. For cedar and spruce clapboard common in older NB homes, use an oil-based or high-adhesion acrylic primer — $40-60/gallon. Apply primer the same day bare wood is exposed — raw wood absorbs moisture quickly in NB's climate.

For the topcoat, a **100% acrylic latex exterior paint at $55-80/gallon** is the right choice. Two coats are mandatory.

A full exterior repaint on a bungalow in NB costs **$4,000-7,000**, while a two-storey runs **$6,000-12,000**. With badly peeling siding, expect the higher end. For any home where you suspect lead paint (pre-1978 builds), hire a professional.

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Q15

Should I skim coat my walls before painting if they have minor imperfections in my Moncton home?

Whether to skim coat depends on the severity of the imperfections and the sheen level of paint you plan to use. For minor dings, small nail holes, and hairline cracks, spot-filling with joint compound is usually enough. For walls with widespread texture, numerous repairs, or if you're planning a satin or semi-gloss finish that will highlight every flaw, a full skim coat gives dramatically better results.

Paint sheens are brutally honest about wall imperfections. Flat and matte paints hide surface irregularities well — the low-reflectance finish scatters light and your eye doesn't catch the bumps and dips. But as you move up the sheen scale toward eggshell, satin, and semi-gloss, those same imperfections become increasingly visible in raking light. In an older Moncton home with walls that have been painted and patched over decades, a coat of paint at even eggshell sheen can make the wall look like a topographic map under a window with afternoon sun streaming across it. If your client history, flat paint will cover a lot of sins. Satin will not.

A skim coat is a thin layer of diluted joint compound spread over the entire wall surface with a wide drywall knife, then sanded smooth after drying. The goal is a flat, uniform surface — not filling deep holes, but levelling the micro-texture of old paint, lap marks from previous roller applications, and the countless small imperfections that accumulate on walls over years of patching. In Moncton homes built in the 1970s-1990s, walls often have stipple texture on them from original finishing — if the homeowner wants a smooth finish now, the stipple must either be skim-coated over or removed, and skim coating is almost always the more practical approach.

Practically speaking, assess your walls at an angle with a bright work light held close to the surface. This raking light reveals texture and imperfections that are invisible under normal room lighting. If you see widespread roughness, tool marks, or patching that covers more than 20-30% of the wall area, a skim coat will give you a far better result than spot-filling alone. If you only see a handful of specific spots, patch those, sand flush, prime the patches, and you're good to go.

For homeowners comfortable with drywall work, a skim coat is a DIY-able project — joint compound is forgiving and you can sand out imperfections. But getting a truly flat skim coat takes practice, and a skilled painter or drywall finisher can skim coat a room much faster and flatter than most DIYers manage. In Moncton, skim coating a typical bedroom runs around 00-450 on top of painting costs, depending on wall condition. For a kitchen or living room where you want to show off a nice satin finish, it's money well spent.

After any skim coat, always prime with a PVA or high-build primer before your finish colour. The freshly skimmed surface is porous and will flash badly without a primer coat, exactly like new drywall.

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Q16

How do I prepare and prime a water-stained ceiling before repainting in a New Brunswick home?

Before painting over a water stain, fix the leak — always. Painting over an active water stain is a temporary cover-up that will fail within months as moisture continues to push through. Once the source is repaired and the ceiling is fully dry, a shellac-based or oil-based stain-blocking primer is the only reliable solution for permanently sealing water stains.

Water stains are stubbornly persistent because the minerals and organic compounds deposited by evaporating water are highly water-soluble. If you try to cover a water stain with regular latex paint — even paint-and-primer-in-one — those minerals will dissolve into the fresh paint and bleed right through to the surface, sometimes showing up as a yellowish or brownish ring even after two or three coats. This is one of the most common painting frustrations homeowners in Fredericton and Moncton encounter, usually after a small roof leak or an upstairs bathroom drip.

The solution is a shellac-based stain-blocking primer like Zinsser BIN (shellac-based) or an oil-based stain blocker like Zinsser Cover Stain. These products seal the stain through a mechanism that water-based paints cannot match — the shellac or oil vehicle bonds over the staining compounds and creates a barrier that water simply cannot penetrate. One coat of shellac primer properly applied over a dry water stain will block it permanently. Expect to pay 5-65 for a litre of shellac-based primer. It applies with a brush or roller and dries in about 45 minutes to an hour.

Important: shellac-based primer has a strong solvent smell and releases more VOCs than water-based products. Open windows, use a fan to ventilate, and wear a respirator rated for organic vapours when applying it. In a New Brunswick winter when you can't open windows, water-based stain blockers like Zinsser Bulls Eye 1-2-3 are a better choice for ventilation reasons — they won't stop a severe stain as effectively as shellac, but for light stains they often do the job with much lower VOCs.

Before priming, make sure the stained area is bone dry. In NB, a ceiling that had a slow leak can hold moisture in the gypsum board for weeks after the leak is fixed. Press firmly on the stained area — if it feels soft or spongy, there may still be wet gypsum. Give it two to four weeks of drying time with heat on before priming. For large areas of water damage where the drywall has become soft, sagging, or crumbly, replacement is usually the better approach — paint and primer cannot structurally repair compromised drywall.

Once the stain-blocking primer dries, finish with one or two coats of a quality flat ceiling paint. Dedicated ceiling paints are formulated to minimize lap marks and drips, which matters a lot when you're painting above your head. A fresh white ceiling makes a room feel clean and bright — and with the stain properly blocked first, it stays that way.

If the leak was significant, the stained area is large (more than 30-40 cm across), or you're unsure whether the drywall is structurally sound, it's worth having a professional painter — or a general contractor — assess the ceiling before repainting.

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Q17

What is the proper way to sand between coats of paint for the smoothest finish?

Sanding between coats is what separates a truly smooth professional finish from a paint job that looks acceptable from across the room but rough up close. The process is straightforward: let each coat dry fully, sand lightly with fine-grit paper to remove texture, dust, and imperfections, wipe clean, and apply the next coat.

The first thing to understand is grit selection. Between coats on walls, 220-grit sandpaper is the standard — fine enough that it smooths without cutting too aggressively into the previous coat. On trim, doors, and cabinets where you're after a glassy finish, some painters go even finer with 320-grit between coats. On the first coat over bare drywall or primer, you might use 180-grit to knock down any raised grain or texture before fine-sanding subsequent coats with 220. Avoid anything coarser than 150-grit between finish coats — you'll create scratches that show through.

The most important rule is patience: the coat must be fully dry before sanding. A coat that feels dry to the touch may still be soft underneath in New Brunswick's humid summer conditions. If you sand too soon, you'll get sticky, gummy residue on your sandpaper and the surface will look torn rather than smoothed. On trim and cabinets where the paint is thicker, wait a minimum of 24 hours, and 48 hours is better. For latex wall paint in normal interior conditions, the manufacturer's recommended recoat time is usually 4 hours, but sanding to a truly smooth surface is easier and more effective after a full overnight dry.

For walls, a sanding sponge or a pole sander with 220-grit paper works well. Sand with light, even pressure using circular or cross-hatching motions. You're not trying to remove the coat — just smooth it. You'll feel the surface go from slightly rough to glassy under your palm. For trim and doors, wrap sandpaper around a firm sanding block to keep pressure even; sanding with just your fingers can leave low spots at the edges of your fingertips. On curved profiles like round mouldings and spindles, a flexible sanding sponge conforms to the shape better than flat paper.

After sanding, cleaning the dust off is just as important as the sanding itself. Vacuum the surface first, then wipe with a slightly damp cloth or a tack cloth. Paint does not adhere well over sanding dust — it creates a barrier between the coat you're applying and the one underneath, which can cause adhesion failure over time. On trim being painted with an oil-based or alkyd-style paint (like Benjamin Moore Advance or Sherwin-Williams ProClassic), wiping with a lint-free cloth dampened with mineral spirits after the tack cloth gives an even cleaner surface.

In New Brunswick's humid summer months, dust generated by sanding can settle slowly in heavy, humid air. Working with a window cracked and a fan drawing air out of the room helps clear dust faster and gives you a cleaner surface to paint. For the absolute smoothest finish on cabinets or high-end trim work, this is where professional spray application — with proper surface prep between coats — makes results look factory-finished. A brush-and-roll approach can still look very good with careful sanding, but spray application minimizes brush marks to start, so there's less to sand between coats.

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Q18

How do I remove mildew from exterior wood before painting a home in coastal New Brunswick?

Mildew on exterior wood must be killed and removed before painting — never simply painted over. Paint applied over mildew creates a sealed, warm, slightly moist environment that mildew loves, and it will grow right through the new paint within a season, leaving black or grey stains on your fresh finish.

This is an especially important issue for homes along the Bay of Fundy coast, around Shediac, Bathurst, and the Saint John harbour area. The combination of salt-laden air, prevailing moisture off the ocean, and shade on north-facing walls creates perfect mildew conditions. Even inland homes in the Saint John River valley and around Fredericton deal with mildew on soffits, protected overhangs, and the lower courses of siding that stay damp after rain.

The standard treatment is a diluted bleach solution: mix one part household bleach (sodium hypochlorite) with three parts water and add a small squirt of dish soap to help the solution penetrate and cling to the surface. Apply with a stiff brush or pump garden sprayer, scrub the mildewed areas thoroughly, and let the solution sit for 10-15 minutes. The bleach kills the mildew organism — not just the visible stain, but the fungal roots embedded in the wood. Rinse thoroughly with clean water and let the surface dry completely. For stubborn mildew on older, weathered wood, a second application may be needed.

There are also commercial mildew removers and exterior cleaners available at NB paint stores and hardware stores — products containing sodium hypochlorite or sodium percarbonate work on the same principle as the bleach solution and are sometimes easier to apply safely. Expect to pay 5-30 for a concentrated mildew treatment product that covers a significant area.

Safety matters during this process: wear rubber gloves, safety glasses, and old clothes — bleach splatter is unpredictable, especially when scrubbing or using a sprayer. Don't mix bleach with any other cleaning products, including ammonia-based cleaners, which creates toxic chloramine gas. Keep children and pets away from the work area while cleaning and rinsing.

After cleaning and rinsing, give the wood at least 48-72 hours of dry weather to return to safe moisture levels before applying primer. Test with a moisture meter — wood needs to be below 15% moisture content before painting. In NB's Maritime climate, shaded north walls can hold moisture for longer than you might expect even after they look dry on the surface.

Once dry, prime with an exterior primer that contains a mildewcide — many quality exterior primers and paints include mildewcide additives (Sherwin-Williams Exterior Primer, Benjamin Moore Fresh Start Exterior Primer, and Dulux's exterior line all have mildewcide options). The mildewcide doesn't eliminate the need to clean first, but it inhibits regrowth in the new film. Finish with a 100% acrylic latex exterior paint, which breathes better than oil-based coatings and resists mildew colonisation far better in NB's humid conditions.

For homes where mildew covers large areas or keeps coming back aggressively year after year, the underlying cause may be a ventilation issue in the attic or wall cavity. A professional painter can help identify the pattern, but if the mildew is always in the same spot despite proper cleaning and painting, a building envelope assessment may be worthwhile.

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Q19

What is the best stain-blocking primer for covering knots in spruce and cedar trim in NB homes?

Shellac-based primer is the gold standard for blocking knots in spruce and cedar — nothing else reliably stops the tannins and resins that bleed out of wood knots from staining through finish paint. Zinsser BIN is the most widely available product in New Brunswick and the one most professional painters reach for first.

Wood knots contain concentrated resin pockets and tannins that are highly soluble and remarkably mobile. When you paint over a knot with a water-based primer or even a quality latex paint, the heat of summer or the warmth of a heated interior slowly activates the resin, which migrates up through the paint film and leaves a yellow, brown, or orange ring on your beautiful white trim — sometimes within weeks of painting, sometimes within a year or two. This is a very common frustration in NB homes because both spruce (used extensively in framing and trim throughout the province) and cedar (popular for exterior trim and decorative millwork) are resin-rich species.

Zinsser BIN (shellac-based primer) is your best option for two reasons: shellac is the one coating that forms an airtight barrier impenetrable to resin migration, and it dries very fast — usually 45 minutes to touch, an hour to recoat. It's available at paint stores and hardware stores in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John, typically priced at 5-65 per litre. One coat over each knot is usually sufficient. You can apply it selectively — just brush it over the knot areas and a few centimetres around each one, rather than priming the entire surface, though for knotty wood with many knots, full coverage is more efficient.

For situations where shellac's strong solvent odour is a concern — particularly interior trim work in an occupied home in winter when windows must stay closed — water-based stain blockers like Zinsser Bulls Eye 1-2-3 or Zinsser Gardz are a more comfortable option. They block light to moderate knot bleed reasonably well and have much lower VOC content and odour. For deeply resinous knots (particularly large, dark knots in spruce), water-based blockers sometimes allow a faint ghost stain through over time, so shellac remains the more reliable choice for problem knots.

On exterior trim, knot bleeding is even more pronounced because summer heat drives resin upward aggressively. For cedar barge boards, fascia, and window trim on NB homes — particularly on south- and west-facing walls that get hot summer sun — always use shellac-based or oil-based stain-blocking primer on every knot, even small ones. An oil-based exterior primer (Zinsser Cover Stain is a popular choice) also works very well for exterior knots and provides excellent adhesion on weathered wood.

A practical approach: after sanding and cleaning new trim, spot-prime every knot with shellac BIN, let it dry, then apply a full coat of your chosen water-based exterior or interior primer over the entire piece. This gives you the stain-blocking performance of shellac at the knots, with the easier clean-up and topcoating properties of a water-

based primer everywhere else.

For very knotty wood throughout — which you sometimes see in older NB homes that used lower-grade spruce for interior trim — priming the entire surface with shellac is the most reliable approach, even if it means working with the solvent odour and mineral spirits for clean-up. The result is trim that stays white for years rather than months.

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Q20

How do I caulk gaps between trim and walls before painting for a clean professional look?

Caulking the gap between trim and walls before painting is one of the single most effective things you can do to make a paint job look professional. That thin line of shadow between a baseboard and a wall, or between door casing and drywall, is the most visible sign of an amateur finish. Filled and painted, those transitions disappear completely.

The right product for this application is a **paintable acrylic latex caulk** — sometimes labelled "painter's caulk" or "siliconized acrylic caulk." Do not use 100% silicone caulk for this purpose; silicone cannot be painted over and it will remain a tacky, ugly stripe regardless of what paint you apply. Look for a product that clearly states "paintable" on the label. DAP Alex Flex, GE Paintable Latex Caulk, and similar products are widely available at hardware stores across NB for -10 per tube. One tube typically covers about 15-20 linear metres of gap, so a typical room might need one to two tubes.

The technique is simple but benefits from a steady hand. Load the caulk tube into a caulk gun and cut the tip at a 45-degree angle — start with a small opening, maybe 3-4mm, since trim gaps are rarely wide. Run a consistent

bead along the gap between trim and wall by moving the gun at a steady pace. Immediately after running the bead, wet your fingertip in water and smooth the caulk in one continuous stroke, pushing it into the gap and wiping away the excess. Work in 60-90cm sections rather than trying to run and smooth the whole wall at once — the caulk skins over quickly, especially in a warm, dry room.

For caulking to look truly sharp, timing matters relative to your painting schedule. Apply caulk after you've painted the walls their finish colour but before you paint the trim. That way, you can be precise with caulk placement, and any small smears on the already-painted wall are easy to touch up. Some painters prefer to caulk first and paint everything after — both approaches work, it's a matter of workflow preference. What doesn't work is applying caulk over fully dried finish paint with any significant texture, because the caulk won't bond as well to the painted surface.

In New Brunswick's older housing stock, caulking trim gaps is especially important. Homes built before the 1990s often have settled and shifted over decades, creating wider gaps between trim and walls than you'd see in new construction. Some of these gaps — particularly at the bottom of baseboards where hardwood or tile floors have heaved slightly — may be 5-8mm wide or more. For gaps this wide, use a foam backer rod first (a foam cord that fills the space and gives the caulk something to bond to) before applying caulk over top. Without backer rod, thick caulk in wide gaps tends to shrink and crack as it cures.

Don't forget exterior trim as well — caulking where exterior trim meets siding is a critical maintenance step before repainting. Gaps at window and door casings are primary entry points for water in NB's wet climate, and a quality caulk line there can add years to your exterior paint life. Use a siliconized acrylic exterior caulk rated for outdoor use on exterior applications (paintable versions are available). Take your time with this — a well-caulked exterior trim job before painting is protective maintenance, not just cosmetics.

Q21

What wood moisture content is safe for painting exterior surfaces in New Brunswick's humid climate?

Wood must be at or below 15% moisture content before you apply any primer or paint to exterior surfaces in New Brunswick. This is not a guideline — it's a hard threshold. Paint applied over wood with higher moisture content traps that moisture inside, and as the wood dries and the trapped water tries to escape, it lifts and blisters the paint from underneath.

Wood moisture content is measured with an inexpensive **pin-type or pinless moisture meter**, which you can find at hardware stores in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John for about 0-80. Professional painters use them routinely before exterior projects. For a pin-type meter, you press two small probes into the wood surface and read the percentage on the display. Pinless meters use electromagnetic sensing and don't leave marks — useful for finished surfaces. Either type works fine for checking siding, trim, and decking before painting.

New Brunswick's climate creates specific moisture challenges that make this measurement particularly important. Spring is the most dangerous time. Snowmelt in April and May saturates soil and drives ground moisture upward through foundations and lower siding courses. Spring rains are frequent and heavy. Wood siding that has been exposed to a NB winter often comes out of the season holding 18-25% moisture or higher — far above the painting threshold — even if it looks and feels dry to the touch on a sunny May day. Painting too early in spring is one of the most common causes of exterior paint failure in the province. Check moisture levels in multiple spots, including on the shaded north side and in lower courses near the foundation, before proceeding.

After any rain or pressure washing, wait at least 48-72 hours of dry, sunny weather before testing moisture content again. Shaded areas, north walls, and wood siding near the ground take longer to dry than south-facing sun-exposed areas. A good rule of thumb: if you wouldn't be confident the wood has been consistently dry for three or more days, test before you prime.

The 15% threshold applies to the wood beneath any existing paint as well. On surfaces where the existing paint is intact and well-adhered, moisture in the substrate is less of a concern because the existing paint film is already acting as a barrier. Where the old paint has peeled, cracked, or been scraped away exposing bare wood, those bare patches need to reach below 15% before spot-priming and repainting.

Temperature also interacts with moisture. On cool NB mornings, dew and condensation can wet the wood surface even on an otherwise dry day. Avoid painting before 10 AM or after about 4 PM in the shoulder seasons — let the morning dew burn off fully. The ideal painting conditions in NB are mid-morning to early afternoon on a day with low humidity (below 60-65%), air temperature between 15-25°C, and no rain forecast for at least 24-48 hours.

For homeowners who want to start their exterior project as early as possible in spring, the practical answer is: be patient. A week of dry, warm weather in late May is worth waiting for. Rushing the job before the wood is ready adds another repainting project three years from now — and in NB's short exterior season, that's a real cost.

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- Expressions Painting
- Thirty Four Renovations
- moose luxury painting
- Worry No More Handyman Services
- M And M Painting

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