

NEW BRUNSWICK PAINTING

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# Wallpaper

Wallpaper removal, wallpaper installation, painting over wallpaper, and wall prep after wallpaper removal

12 Expert Answers from Paint IQ

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## What types of modern wallpaper are best suited for New Brunswick's humid Maritime climate?

**Modern wallpaper options for New Brunswick's Maritime climate focus on moisture resistance and breathability.** Vinyl-coated papers, non-woven wallpapers, and specialty moisture-resistant materials perform best in our humid summers and temperature swings.

**Vinyl and Vinyl-Coated Wallpapers** are your most reliable choice for NB's climate. These have a protective vinyl layer that resists moisture penetration while still allowing some breathability. They're particularly important in coastal areas like Saint John, Shediac, and Bathurst where salt-laden humidity can be especially challenging. Vinyl wallpapers clean easily with a damp cloth, making them practical for kitchens and bathrooms where Maritime humidity combines with cooking steam or shower moisture.

**Non-Woven Wallpapers** offer excellent performance in fluctuating humidity conditions. Unlike traditional paper-backed wallpapers that expand and contract with moisture changes, non-woven materials remain dimensionally stable. This prevents the bubbling, peeling, and seam separation that's common with cheaper wallpapers in NB's climate. Non-woven papers also install more easily and remove cleanly when you're ready to redecorate.

**Avoid Traditional Paper Wallpapers** in NB homes, especially older houses built before 1980 that often lack proper vapor barriers. Standard wallpaper can trap moisture against the wall, leading to mold growth behind the paper and adhesive failure. This is particularly problematic in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John homes where interior humidity can reach 60-70% during summer months without air conditioning.

### Specialty Considerations for NB Climate:

- **Breathable wallpapers** allow moisture to pass through rather than trapping it, which is crucial in older homes with limited vapor barriers
- **Mold-resistant adhesives** are essential — many modern wallpaper pastes include anti-microbial additives
- **Textured surfaces** hide minor wall imperfections common in older NB housing stock while providing better moisture management than smooth papers

**Installation timing matters significantly** in our Maritime climate. Install wallpaper during NB's drier months (November through March) when indoor humidity is lower due to heating systems. Summer installation during humid periods can prevent proper adhesion and cause immediate bubbling.

**Professional installation is strongly recommended** for wallpaper in NB's challenging climate conditions. Proper surface preparation, moisture testing, appropriate adhesive selection, and installation techniques make the difference between wallpaper that lasts 10+ years and wallpaper that fails within two years.

For other home improvement needs beyond wallpaper installation, you can find qualified contractors through the New Brunswick Construction Network at [newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com](http://newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com).

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Q2

## What is the difference between peel-and-stick wallpaper and traditional paste wallpaper for a rental property in Moncton?

**Peel-and-stick wallpaper is designed for temporary application and easy removal, making it ideal for rental properties, while traditional paste wallpaper creates a permanent bond that typically requires professional removal and wall repair.**

For rental properties in Moncton, **peel-and-stick wallpaper** offers significant advantages. This product uses a repositionable adhesive that bonds to painted walls without damaging the underlying surface. When removed properly, it should come off cleanly without leaving residue or requiring wall repairs. This makes it perfect for tenants who want to personalize their space without losing their security deposit, or for landlords who want to refresh units between tenants without major renovation costs.

**Traditional paste wallpaper** creates a much stronger, permanent bond with the wall surface. The wheat-based or synthetic paste penetrates into the drywall texture and paint, creating adhesion that's designed to last decades. Removing traditional wallpaper typically requires steaming, scraping, and often damages the underlying drywall paper or paint. In older Moncton rental properties (many built in the 1960s-80s), removing traditional wallpaper frequently reveals multiple layers underneath, damaged plaster, or walls that need skim coating and repainting before they're rental-ready again.

**Quality and durability differences** are notable. Peel-and-stick products have improved dramatically in recent years, with options that look nearly identical to traditional wallpaper when installed. However, they're still more prone to edge lifting in high-humidity areas like bathrooms, and the adhesive can fail over time, especially in Moncton's humid summers. Traditional wallpaper, when properly installed, provides superior durability and a more premium appearance, but that permanence becomes a liability in rental situations.

**Cost considerations** favor peel-and-stick for rentals. While the material cost per square foot is often similar (\$25-60 per roll for either type), the installation and removal costs are vastly different. Peel-and-stick can be installed by anyone in an afternoon, while traditional wallpaper installation runs \$3-6 per square foot for professional application in Moncton. More importantly, traditional wallpaper removal and wall repair can cost \$800-2,000 per room when it's time for a change.

**For Moncton rental properties**, peel-and-stick wallpaper is almost always the better choice. It allows for easy updates between tenants, reduces turnover costs, and eliminates disputes over wall damage. Choose high-quality peel-and-stick products designed for textured walls, and avoid using them in steamy bathrooms where the adhesive may fail.

**When traditional wallpaper makes sense:** If you're a landlord planning to keep the same design for 10+ years in a high-end rental property, traditional wallpaper's superior durability and appearance might justify the cost. However, most Moncton rental situations benefit from the flexibility of removable options.

Need help finding a professional painter to prep walls or refresh your rental property? New Brunswick Painting can match you with local contractors experienced in rental property maintenance.

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Q3

## Should I remove old wallpaper before painting or can I paint over it in my NB home?

**You should remove old wallpaper before painting almost every time.** Painting over wallpaper is a shortcut that looks fine for a year or two, then causes headaches that are far more expensive to fix than simply doing the removal properly from the start.

The core problem is that paint adds moisture to wallpaper. The seams lift, bubbles form between layers, and the pattern of the original wallpaper telegraphs through even thick coats of paint, giving walls an unmistakably lumpy look. Wallpaper also has edges and seams that are slightly raised from the wall surface — once painted over, these show clearly in raking light from windows or lamps. In older NB homes where multiple layers of wallpaper were common — it wasn't unusual for Moncton or Fredericton homes from the 1950s through 1980s to have three or four layers — painting over the stack just makes the problem worse.

**The one situation where painting over wallpaper can be acceptable** is when the wallpaper is old, very firmly adhered, completely flat and seamless, and removing it would damage the plaster beneath. This is sometimes the reality in pre-1950 Saint John or Fredericton homes where wallpaper was hung directly on plaster with old wheat-paste adhesives, and any removal attempt tears the plaster face right off. In that specific case, carefully gluing down any loose seams, applying an oil-based stain-blocking primer, and painting carefully can be a reasonable compromise. But it should be a last resort, not a first choice.

**For NB homes built from the 1950s onward**, the walls are almost certainly drywall, not plaster, and wallpaper removal is worthwhile even though drywall is more easily damaged in the process than plaster. The key is using the right technique: score lightly with a scoring tool, apply warm water or wallpaper stripper solution (DIF concentrate is widely available in NB), and remove in sections before the paper dries out. Patience saves the drywall surface.

Once the wallpaper is down, you will likely need to repair some surface damage, seal the wall with a quality primer, and skim coat any areas where the drywall paper got torn or the surface got rough. This is extra work, but the finished paint job will be smooth, durable, and properly adhered — not a ticking clock waiting to bubble and peel.

If you're unsure about the scope of the removal in your home, a professional assessment can help you decide whether removal or painting over is the better path for your specific walls. New Brunswick Painting can connect you with experienced local painters who handle wallpaper removal regularly.

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## How do I remove multiple layers of old wallpaper in a Moncton home built in the 1970s?

**Removing multiple layers of old wallpaper in a 1970s Moncton home is a significant project, but it's very doable with the right method: score, soak, and strip one layer at a time.** Trying to rush multiple layers off at once tears up the drywall beneath and creates a much bigger repair job.

Homes built in the 1970s in Moncton and across New Brunswick almost universally have drywall rather than plaster, which is important to know because drywall requires a gentler touch than old plaster walls. The paper face of drywall is your enemy here — once it tears, you're looking at skim coating before painting. Go slow and wet.

### **The process that works:**

Start with a perforation scorer tool (the Zinsser Paper Tiger is a common choice at NB hardware stores). Roll it over the entire surface to punch small holes through the wallpaper layers. Don't press too hard — you're creating channels for water to penetrate, not gouging the wall. With multiple layers, this step is especially important because the outer layers act as a waterproof barrier that prevents soaking solution from reaching the adhesive.

Mix a wallpaper removal solution — DIF Concentrate mixed with warm water is reliable and available at most NB hardware stores and paint shops. Apply generously with a garden sprayer or large sponge, working in sections of about 1 to 1.5 square metres at a time. Let it soak for five to ten minutes, then use a 15 cm flexible plastic scraper or a wide putty knife to peel the wallpaper away. Work slowly and at a low angle to avoid digging into the drywall. Wipe excess adhesive off the wall with a wet sponge as you go — residue that dries hard is harder to remove later.

**With 1970s homes specifically**, watch for a couple of things. First, the wallpaper may have been hung without sizing (a preparatory coating over the drywall), which means the adhesive bonded directly to the drywall paper face. When this happens, the top layer of the drywall tears away with the wallpaper. Wetting it slowly and removing small sections reduces this risk. Second, some 1970s vinyl wallpapers have a fabric backing that stays behind after the decorative face strips away. That backing layer needs its own soaking and scraping before you're done.

**A note on lead paint:** Homes built in the 1970s may have lead paint on the trim, doors, and window frames, but the wallpaper and drywall itself are generally not a lead concern. If you're uncertain about any painted surfaces you uncover, test before sanding with a lead test kit available at hardware stores.

This is a job many NB homeowners tackle themselves for a single room, but for a full-house removal or older homes with many layers, hiring a professional painter who does wallpaper removal regularly will save you days of work and reduce the risk of drywall damage that needs professional repair.

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Q5

## What is the best way to prepare walls for painting after removing wallpaper in NB?

**After wallpaper removal, walls need cleaning, repair, priming, and sometimes skim coating before they're ready for paint.** Skipping any of these steps and going straight to paint is one of the most common mistakes homeowners make — the resulting finish shows every imperfection and adhesive ghost.

The first step is washing the walls thoroughly. Wallpaper adhesive leaves a residue that is nearly invisible when dry but shows right through paint as shiny patches, streaking, or fish-eye spots. Wash the entire wall surface with warm water and a sponge, changing the water frequently. For stubborn residue, a small amount of white vinegar in the wash water helps dissolve the old paste. Let the walls dry completely — in NB's climate, give them at least 24 hours with good ventilation. In humid summer conditions in Moncton or along the coast, run a dehumidifier and a fan to speed drying.

**Surface repair comes next.** Inspect every centimetre of wall under raking light — hold a lamp close to the wall and look for dings, tears in the drywall face paper, gouges from the scraper, and areas where the surface is rough or bubbled. Small dings fill with spackling compound or lightweight joint compound (USG and CGC products are widely available in NB). Areas where the drywall face paper tore need to be sealed with an oil-based primer or shellac-based primer first — without this step, the torn paper will bubble and rise when water-based products are applied. Let repairs dry fully, then sand smooth with 120-grit sandpaper and wipe clean.

**Primer is non-negotiable** on post-wallpaper walls. The wall surface has adhesive residue, repaired areas, possibly torn drywall paper, and different levels of porosity all competing to absorb paint unevenly. A quality stain-blocking primer ties all of this together. **Gardz (by Zinsser)** is a product specifically designed for post-wallpaper walls — it's

a penetrating primer that hardens damaged drywall paper and seals adhesive residue. Apply one coat and let it dry. You can find it in NB at larger paint stores.

For walls with significant surface damage or texture variation, a **skim coat** — a thin layer of drywall joint compound spread with a wide knife and sanded smooth — may be needed before priming. This is extra work but produces a noticeably smoother finish.

After priming, do one final inspection in raking light before painting. It's much easier to fix a spot at this stage than after you've rolled on two coats of your chosen colour.

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Q6

## How do I repair damaged drywall after wallpaper removal before painting in my Fredericton home?

**Drywall damage after wallpaper removal is extremely common in Fredericton homes, especially from the 1960s through 1990s, and it's very repairable with joint compound, primer, and patience.** The key is sealing torn drywall paper before applying any water-based products, or you'll cause the damage to worsen.

When wallpaper is removed, the paper facing of the drywall often tears away with it, leaving areas of exposed gypsum (the white, chalky core of the drywall panel). These spots have a fuzzy, rough texture and are highly absorbent. If you apply joint compound or water-based primer directly to exposed gypsum without sealing it first, the moisture causes the gypsum to swell, bubble, and deteriorate further.

**The repair sequence that works:**

First, assess the damage. Small tears and gouges are easy DIY repairs. Large areas of missing drywall paper across most of a wall surface, or holes through the drywall completely, may justify professional skim coating or even drywall replacement — especially if you're aiming for a smooth, high-quality finish.

For small to medium damage, seal all exposed gypsum and torn paper areas with an **oil-based primer** (Zinsser BIN shellac-based primer is excellent) or a penetrating primer like Gardz. Apply with a brush, let it dry fully (30 to 60 minutes for shellac), and sand lightly with 120-grit to knock down any raised fibres. This sealing step is what most DIYers skip — don't.

Once sealed, apply **lightweight joint compound** to any indentations, torn areas, or rough spots. Feather it out beyond the damaged area so the repair blends into the surrounding wall. Let dry fully — joint compound appears darker when wet and turns uniformly white when dry. Sand smooth with 120-grit, then 150-grit. Wipe dust clean with a barely damp cloth.

**For widespread surface roughness** across a full wall, a skim coat is the better approach: thin joint compound to a pancake-batter consistency, apply with a 25-30 cm drywall knife in sweeping passes, and sand once dry. This levels the entire surface rather than patching individual spots. It takes practice to do smoothly, but it's the same technique professional drywall finishers use.

After all repairs are dry and sanded, apply a coat of quality primer before your finish paint. In a Fredericton home where you may have both older and repaired areas on the same wall, a PVA primer (designed for new drywall) or Gardz gives you a uniform surface porosity that makes the final paint colour look even across the wall.

Older homes in Fredericton's residential neighbourhoods — particularly the Northside, Skyline Acres, and Brookside areas with heavy postwar construction — almost always need this full repair-and-prime sequence after wallpaper removal. It adds a day or two to the project timeline but it's what makes the difference between a finish that looks professional and one that shows every flaw through the paint.

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## Can I install peel-and-stick wallpaper over painted walls in my NB home?

**Yes, you can install peel-and-stick wallpaper over painted walls in most NB homes, provided the painted surface is clean, dry, smooth, and has a flat or eggshell sheen — not a high-gloss or freshly applied finish.**

It's a popular choice for renters and homeowners who want a temporary or easily changeable decorative option without the commitment of traditional wallpaper.

The main factor that determines success is the condition of the paint surface underneath. Peel-and-stick wallpaper relies on an adhesive backing that grips smooth, clean surfaces well but struggles with anything rough, dirty, or porous. **Flat paint is actually the trickiest surface** — its porous texture doesn't give the adhesive a strong enough grip, and the panels tend to peel away from the wall prematurely, especially along the seams. If your NB home's walls are painted with flat paint (common in living rooms and bedrooms), consider rolling on a coat of eggshell finish in a neutral colour and letting it cure for at least 30 days before applying peel-and-stick panels.

**High-gloss paint is the other end of the problem.** You might think a smooth, non-porous surface would grip the adhesive well, but high-gloss is actually too slippery for most peel-and-stick products — the panels slide slightly during installation and can lift at corners over time. Eggshell and satin finishes are the sweet spot.

**Surface preparation still matters**, even for a temporary product. Clean the walls with a mild soap solution (dish soap and warm water) and let them dry completely before installation. In NB's humid summers, give freshly cleaned walls a full day to dry, and run a fan to help. Any bumps, nail holes, or texture on the wall will telegraph through thin peel-and-stick panels — fill and sand before applying.

One practical NB consideration: **the adhesive performance of peel-and-stick products is temperature-dependent.** In winter, unheated or under-heated rooms in NB homes can get cold enough to weaken the adhesive temporarily. If you're applying in a room that gets cold in winter — a bedroom near an exterior wall in an older Moncton or Saint John house without great insulation — the panels may start lifting in January even if they adhered perfectly in September. Keep the room above 15°C during and after installation.

**When you remove peel-and-stick wallpaper**, test a small corner first. In most cases on well-cured eggshell paint, it peels cleanly. On older paint, freshly applied paint (less than 30 days old), or paint that wasn't bonded well to begin with, removal can pull paint off the wall. The fresher the underlying paint, the greater this risk.

Peel-and-stick works best as a feature wall statement rather than a whole-room application — one accent wall in a bedroom, a mudroom back panel, or a powder room transformation. For a full-room wallcovering with a permanent look, traditional paste wallpaper installed by a professional will perform and look better long-term.

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Q8

## How much does it cost to have a professional remove wallpaper and repaint a room in New Brunswick?

**Professional wallpaper removal plus repainting a standard room in New Brunswick typically costs \$1,000-2,500 all-in — but in older NB homes where wallpaper was applied directly to bare drywall or over multiple previous layers, the cost can reach \$2,500-4,500.**

The wide price range comes down to what's behind the wallpaper. Modern homes (post-1990) usually have wallpaper over properly primed drywall, which releases cleanly. Total cost for a 12x12 bedroom — removal, repair, prime, and two coats — runs **\$900-1,500**.

Older NB homes are a different story. Many homes built before 1985 in Moncton, Saint John, and Fredericton have wallpaper applied directly over unprimed drywall — the drywall paper face tears off when you remove the wallpaper. Some have 2-4 layers of wallpaper. When drywall paper is torn, **skim coating the entire wall surface** adds **\$300-800** to the project cost.

**In plaster-walled homes** — common in pre-1960 housing stock throughout Saint John and Fredericton — wallpaper removal is the most complex scenario. Budget toward the **\$1,800-4,500** range.

### Approximate cost breakdown for a typical NB room (12x12 ft):

- Wallpaper removal only (single layer, modern drywall): **\$300-600**
- Removal, minor skim coat, prime, 2 coats paint: **\$900-1,500**
- Multiple layers or torn drywall, full skim coat: **\$1,500-2,500**
- Plaster walls with complex removal and repair: **\$2,000-4,000+**

Before hiring, ask the painter to assess wall condition and confirm whether the quote is fixed-price or time-and-materials. Wallpaper removal is one of the few situations where time-and-materials is reasonable.

This is **always hire-a-professional** work for whole-room wallpaper removal.

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Q9

## What is the best wallpaper removal method for plaster walls in older Saint John homes?

**For plaster walls in older Saint John homes, the safest removal method is slow soaking with warm water and wallpaper removal solution, using a plastic scraper rather than a metal blade, and working in small sections.** Plaster is more durable than drywall but can crack and crumble at the edges of damage if you rush or use excessive force.

Saint John has some of the oldest housing stock in New Brunswick — and in Canada, for that matter. The South End, North End, and uptown heritage neighbourhoods are full of homes built between the 1870s and 1930s, with true three-coat plaster walls that are hard, dense, and generally more forgiving of moisture than drywall. This is actually good news for wallpaper removal: plaster doesn't fall apart when wet the way drywall does, and you have more time to work once the paper is saturated.

**The key concern with plaster** is not the surface itself but the underlying structure. Old lath-and-plaster construction can have areas where the plaster has already separated from the lath behind it — what plasterers call a hollow spot. You can find these by tapping the wall gently and listening for a dull, hollow sound rather than a solid thud. Don't apply heavy pressure or vibration over hollow spots during removal, or the plaster may crack and break

away in sections. Mark any hollow areas before you start and work around them gently.

### **The removal process:**

Score the wallpaper lightly with a perforation tool — on plaster you can press a bit more firmly than you would on drywall since there's no paper face to tear. Apply DIF wallpaper removal solution (mixed with warm water per label directions) with a garden sprayer or large sponge. Give it a full 10 to 15 minutes to penetrate, especially if the wallpaper is old vinyl-faced or has multiple layers. Use a wide plastic scraper or a 15 cm stiff nylon scraper at a low angle, working with the seams wherever possible.

**Multiple layers** — very common in Saint John's older homes where wallpaper was applied decade after decade — require patience. Remove one layer at a time, re-wetting between layers. The oldest, bottom layer is often the most stubborn because it was hung with old wheat paste directly on the plaster, and the paste has hardened over 50 or 60 years into an almost glue-like bond. Stubborn paste residue responds well to a stronger DIF solution and longer soak times.

**After removal**, wash plaster walls thoroughly to remove all paste residue. Plaster repairs (cracks, small holes, hollow sections) should be done with traditional plaster patching compound or setting-type joint compound, not lightweight spackling, which isn't hard enough for plaster repairs. After repairs cure, prime with an alkali-resistant primer before painting — old lime-based plaster is alkaline, and without the right primer, the paint can saponify (turn soapy) and fail.

This is a project where professional experience genuinely pays off in older Saint John homes. A painter who knows how to work with plaster, identify structural vulnerabilities, and do proper plaster repairs is worth finding through the New Brunswick Construction Network directory.

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## Do I need to skim coat the entire wall after removing wallpaper before painting in NB?

**You don't always need to skim coat the entire wall after wallpaper removal, but you often end up needing to once you see the actual condition of the surface.** Whether a full skim coat is necessary depends on how much drywall damage occurred during removal and how smooth a finish you want from the paint.

After removal, take the time to assess the wall honestly under raking light — hold a lamp at a sharp angle to the wall surface and slowly move it across. Raking light reveals every bump, hollow, torn area, texture variation, and ghost of old adhesive that you simply cannot see in normal room lighting. What looks like a decent wall in overhead lighting often looks like a topographic map under raking light.

### **A full skim coat is necessary when:**

The drywall face paper is torn or missing across large areas of the wall. Even well-primed torn paper has a slightly different texture than intact paper, and once you roll two coats of paint over a wall that's half intact and half patched, the difference shows. If more than 20 to 30 percent of the wall surface has damaged face paper, skim coating the whole wall produces a uniform surface that paints beautifully.

The walls have significant texture variation — areas that are rough, bumpy, or slightly wavy from old adhesive residue or wallpaper texture that transferred to the drywall over decades. Skim coating levels all of this out.

You want a high-quality, smooth finish paint job. High sheen paints (satin, semi-gloss) are particularly unforgiving of surface irregularities — they reflect light and make every bump and hollow visible. If you're aiming for a satin or eggshell finish and the wall is anything less than consistently smooth, a skim coat is worth doing.

### **Spot patching is sufficient when:**

The wall surface is mostly intact — only a few small areas of torn paper or minor damage, and the overall texture is consistent. In this case, seal torn areas with shellac primer, fill with lightweight joint compound, sand flush, prime the whole wall, and proceed to painting.

**The skim coat process:** Thin all-purpose joint compound to the consistency of thick yogurt, apply in a thin, even coat with a wide (30-35 cm) drywall knife, working in overlapping passes. Allow to dry fully (overnight in NB's humid summers), sand with 120-grit on a pole sander, then prime before painting. One full skim coat is usually enough if done well. Two thin coats beat one thick coat every time — thick skim coats crack as they dry.

Many NB homeowners underestimate how much better skim-coated walls look under paint, especially in rooms with large windows or bright lighting. It's extra work, but for a room you'll look at for the next 10 years, it's almost always

worth it.

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Q11

## What primer should I use on walls after wallpaper removal to prevent adhesive bleed-through?

**The best primer for post-wallpaper removal walls is a stain-blocking penetrating primer — either Zinsser Gardz (for sealing damaged drywall and residue) or Zinsser BIN shellac-based primer (for severe staining or adhesive bleed-through).** Using a standard latex primer on post-wallpaper walls almost always results in adhesive ghosting, flashing, and uneven absorption that shows right through your finish paint.

Here's why regular latex primer fails in this situation: wallpaper adhesive, even after thorough washing, leaves microscopic residue embedded in the drywall paper and any exposed gypsum. When water-based primer is applied, it reactivates this old adhesive and allows it to bleed up through the primer coat as shiny, irregular patches — often called adhesive telegraphing or ghosting. You roll on your primer, it looks fine wet, and then as it dries you see darker patches in perfectly straight horizontal strips right where the old wallpaper seams were. It's maddening, and it goes all the way through to your finish coat if you don't address it with the right primer.

**Zinsser Gardz** is specifically formulated for post-wallpaper walls. It's a clear, water-based penetrating sealer that soaks into damaged drywall paper, hardens loose fibres, and seals the surface against adhesive bleed-through. It's the gentlest option and is appropriate when the wallpaper damage is moderate — some torn areas, some residue, but the wall is generally intact. Apply one coat, let dry, and you'll have a stable, sealed surface ready for a quality topcoat primer or directly for finish paint. It's available at paint stores in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John.

**Zinsser BIN (shellac-based primer)** is the heavy artillery. It blocks everything — old adhesive, water stains, smoke, tannin from wood, knots — and nothing bleeds through shellac. Use it when adhesive residue is heavy, when you've had adhesive telegraphing after a first coat of another primer, or when the walls have staining beyond just wallpaper adhesive (common in older NB homes where wallpaper hid years of water damage or moisture staining). The trade-off is that BIN has a strong solvent smell and requires ventilation — open windows and run a fan. In NB's humid summers, check that humidity is below 70% for best results. BIN dries in 45 minutes and can be topcoated with any latex paint.

**Do not use a PVA primer** (drywall primer) as your first coat over post-wallpaper walls. PVA is water-based and will reactivate the adhesive residue. PVA is excellent as a second coat over Gardz or BIN to smooth out the surface and provide a uniform base for finish paint, but it should never be the first coat on a post-wallpaper surface.

**The recommended sequence** for most NB post-wallpaper walls: repair torn areas, apply Gardz (or BIN for problem areas), let cure, lightly sand any raised texture, apply one coat of quality latex primer, then two coats of finish paint. This sequence produces a smooth, even surface and eliminates the adhesive bleed-through that plagues walls primed too quickly with the wrong product. It's the same approach professional painters in NB use, and it's what separates a finish that looks great in two years from one that looks disappointing in two months.

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**Q12**

**How do I paint over wallpaper that will not come off the walls in my older Moncton home?**

**Painting over stubborn wallpaper is possible, but it requires careful preparation — skip any steps and you will end up with a lumpy, peeling mess within a year or two.** The general rule in the painting trade is that removing wallpaper is always preferable to painting over it, but in older Moncton homes where the wallpaper has been on so long that it has essentially become part of the plaster or drywall beneath, removal can do more damage than leaving it in place.

Before you reach for a brush, you need to assess what you are dealing with. In many pre-1980 Moncton homes, walls are plaster over wood lath — and wallpaper on plaster tends to bond so thoroughly over decades that attempting removal shreds the plaster surface. If your walls are drywall and the paper has glued itself into the drywall facing, removal often pulls the paper facing right off the board, leaving a fuzzy, damaged surface that is nearly impossible to paint properly without skim-coating. In either case, painting over the wallpaper can be the more practical choice.

**The critical first step is sealing all edges and seams.** Every lifted edge and visible seam will telegraph right through your paint. Use a wallpaper seam repair adhesive (available at most NB hardware stores) to glue down any loose sections, pressing firmly and letting it dry fully — usually 24 hours. Next, skim coat over any raised seams with lightweight joint compound, feathering it out several centimetres on each side. Sand smooth when dry. This step determines whether your finished walls look flat and professional or like you painted over old wallpaper.

**You must use an oil-based or shellac-based primer — not latex — as your first coat.** This is the rule experienced painters live by for wallpaper painting. Water-based latex primer will reactivate the wallpaper paste underneath, cause the paper to bubble and lift, and ruin all your prep work. A shellac-based primer like Zinsser BIN or an oil-based primer like Zinsser Cover Stain locks everything down, prevents bleed-through of wallpaper patterns or dye, and gives your latex topcoat something solid to bond to. Apply the primer in a thin, even coat and allow it to dry fully — usually 1-2 hours for shellac, 4-8 hours for oil-based.

**NB climate consideration:** In Moncton's humid summers, give primer extra drying time before applying topcoats. The moisture content in older Maritime homes can be higher than you expect, especially in exterior-facing walls. If you notice any bubbling in the primer coat, stop, let it dry completely, and re-assess — bubbling usually means moisture is present, which is a more serious problem that painting over wallpaper will not solve.

After priming, apply two coats of quality latex wall paint — a satin or eggshell sheen will help hide minor imperfections better than flat. Roll with a 10mm nap roller in a smooth, even W-pattern, working in sections. Avoid pressing too hard with the roller, as excessive pressure on old wallpaper can cause hidden seams to lift.

**When to hire a pro:** If the wallpaper is textured or has a deep embossed pattern, if there are multiple layers, or if removal has already damaged the wall surface significantly, a professional painter can properly skim coat the entire surface before painting — this will always give a better result than painting directly over damaged or heavily

textured wallpaper. For heritage homes in Moncton's older neighbourhoods, where walls may have three or four layers of paper dating back decades, a pro assessment is well worth it.

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