

A person's hand is shown holding a paintbrush with a wooden handle and a metal ferrule. The brush is positioned over a silver metal paint bucket. The bucket has a white handle and is partially filled with red paint, with some paint dripping down its side. The background is a solid, vibrant red. On the left side, a portion of a person's leg wearing blue denim jeans is visible. The text "Embrace Your Fear" is written in a white, outlined, sans-serif font in the upper right quadrant of the image.

Embrace
Your
Fear

FURNITURE PAINTING GUIDE

from selecting furniture to the perfect paint finish

Furniture Painting Guide

By [Kathy Owen, Petticoat Junktion](#)

Furniture Painting Guide For Beginners (or anyone)

I know you're scared because you tell me. I'm going to walk you through your first furniture painting project giving you the advice you need to get started and see the job all the way through.

Taking the first step is always the hardest but it will be worth it. For my first furniture project I set up in my living room to paint. It worked. When we moved to Florida I painted on the tiny, tiny balcony of our two bedroom apartment. That worked too. I've painted furniture in places you wouldn't believe. No excuses from you. Let's do this.

1. Select Your Furniture Project

I know you're thinking you already have your project piece. But you might want to rethink that. For your first furniture paint project you should start with a simple piece. Good candidates are nightstands with straight lines, small chests of drawers with minimal details, tables where you only paint the table top or the drawer fronts. You don't need a piece that requires repairs for your first project. We're just talking basic project here.

Try to steer clear of bookcases, china cabinets, wardrobes, and anything with a lot of shelves or an interior that you are considering painting. The shelves on china cabinets and bookcases have to be painted top and bottom and look at all those corners, whew. Once you paint a small piece or two you will be ready to tackle your china cabinet or bookcase.

2. Stick With Latex Paint

Latex paint works great on furniture. Don't let anyone tell you it doesn't. I paint with all types and brands of paint and I use latex paint all the time. I recommend latex because you can buy it anywhere and is available in any color. Seriously, just buy a good quality latex paint and it will be fine.

3. Stay With Neutral Paint Colors

Neutral colors are anything from black, to white, to gray, to browns, and blues...in various shades. I suggest starting with a neutral color because they usually have good coverage over any stain or finish.

Also a neutral color works with just about any color palette. Pinks, reds, and yellows usually require 3 coats of paint or more. At least that's what I've found to be true. Stay away from bold colors for your first project.

4. What About The Sheen?

Let's talk sheen. Flat paint is low sheen and doesn't reflect light so it hides imperfectionsbut is the most difficult to clean. Matte is low luster and easy to clean. It also hides imperfections. I've never had trouble cleaning the flat or matte paint and I really like the flat look. Plus flat or matte paint will show the least amount of brush marks.

Eggshell has a soft, velvety sheen and satin has just a little more shine. I would stick with flat, matte, eggshell, or satin for the sheen. Semi-gloss and gloss paints are harder to work with and will show brush marks.

5. Use A Good Primer

Most latex paint brands do not require a primer but I recommend using one. The primer (water based) will cover any splotches or uneven areas of the furniture finish and give you a good solid color base for your top coat. Have the primer tinted gray.

White primer is great.....if you are using white paint as a top coat. Gray is easily covered with any color top coat. Just ask the tech at the paint counter to tint the primer gray, no certain shade. They may tell you there isn't room in the can of primer to add tint but they can spoon out a bit of the primer in order to add the gray tint.

6. A Good Paint Brush Is A Necessity

Why buy quality paint and primer if you are going to skimp on the paint brush. There are a number of good paint brush brands; Purdy, Kilz, Wooster, just to name a few. The 1½ or 2 inch size brushes are a good size for most projects and I like a sash brush for corners or edges.

7. Gather All Supplies

Other supplies and tools to have on hand are a screw driver, gloves, painters tape, plastic wrap, drop cloth, plastic bags, and general cleaning solution or plain old soap and water.

8. Prep

Clean your furniture with soap and water or cleaning solution. Remove any drawer pulls and store them in a plastic bag along with the screws.

Set the furniture on the drop cloth and remove the drawers. Apply painters tape on areas where needed including taping over the hardware screw holes on the inside of the

drawer to keep paint from leaking into the drawer. Tape along the front sides of the drawers where they meet the drawer front so you have a nice straight paint line and it doesn't look messy when the drawer is open.

9. Apply Primer

Shake or stir the primer to mix well. Dip the lower half of the brush into the primer to load the brush.

Paint the sides, front, and top of the furniture body in that order then paint the individual drawer fronts. One coat of primer will do the trick. Wash the paint brush well with soap and water.

10. Time To Apply The Paint

Once the primer is dry apply the paint using the same process as you did with the primer. Pull the brush easily across the surface. If the bristles spread out or splay then you are applying too much pressure. Apply the paint going with the grain of the wood and make long strokes. Do not keep brushing over the same area once you have the paint applied equally as it will pull off the paint or the paint will gum up. More than likely you will see some brush marks. Don't go crazy. Most paint will level out as it dries and the brush marks if any will hardly be noticeable.

In between coats of paint wrap the paint brush tightly in plastic wrap or slip your used gloves over the brush wrapping securely. Allow the first coat of paint to dry and apply a second coat of paint. The first coat will usually dry within a couple of hours depending on the environment. The first coat may cover well but I always go with a second coat unless I'm heavy distressing the paint finish.

11. Finish / Clean Up

It's time to put the knobs or pulls back on the drawers and the drawers back in the nightstand or chest. You may decide to change out the pulls or spray paint the original ones. Either way works unless the holes for the new hardware don't match up with the new....and that's another blog post entirely. That problem can be solved easily. Just a bit more work.

Latex paint doesn't require sealing unless it will see heavy use. You should apply a polyacrylic sealer to dining tables and anything that could possibly get damp. Latex paint takes a few weeks to cure completely. You can use the furniture within a few days without having to worry about damaging the paint.

I've talked a lot about latex paint in this guide. Click here to see the reasons I like to use latex paint for furniture.... [10 Really Good Reasons To Paint Furniture With Latex Paint](#)

For a list of my favorite DIY supplies and tools visit the [Petticoat Junktion Amazon Page](#) by clicking here.

I think you're ready to take the leap now. If you still have questions please email me at Kathy@petticoatjunktion.com. Happy Painting! Kathy