

Frequently Asked Questions

Got a question about masking, painting, ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape or Scotch® Masking Tape? Chances are, you'll find the answer here.

Getting Started:

▼ Why mask?

In addition to protecting a surface from paint drips and splatters that may cause damage or are difficult to remove, masking also helps you easily achieve professional-looking results at home. Spending a little money on tape at the beginning of a project is a small price to pay to avoid the time and money spent doing rework or fixing damage.

▼ What size tape should I buy, and does the width matter?

Trim and doors often require wider tape in order to cover the whole surface, or wrap around corners. 1.5" is the most popular, and for good reason - painting can get messy, and this width offers a little more margin for painter error. 1" tape is great for narrow baseboards and glass. ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tapes and Scotch® Masking Tapes come in a variety of widths from ¾" up to 3".

▼ What's the difference between ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape and Scotch® Masking Tape?

The most noticeable difference is the color. Most Scotch® Masking Tapes are beige in color and ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tapes are usually blue, although they are available in other colors as well. Masking tapes use a rubber-based adhesive that is not UV resistant, and cannot be left on a surface for extended periods of time. Masking tape is ideal for use on non-damageable surfaces, such as unfinished wood, brick, concrete and carpet.

Painter's tapes use an acrylic adhesive that provides UV resistance and allows a longer masking time. That makes ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape ideal for use on glass in direct sunlight – the adhesive will not transfer to the glass. ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape for Multi-Surfaces is safe for use on multiple surfaces, and ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape for Delicate Surfaces is specifically designed for delicate surfaces such as wallpaper, wood floors and freshly painted surfaces (less than 30 days old). Painter's tapes are generally recommended for use in most residential painting projects.

▼ How much tape do I need for my project?

Most Scotch® Masking Tapes and ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tapes come in rolls that are 60 yards (180 ft. or 54.8m) long. One 60 yard roll can mask an average-sized (10 x 10) room, such as an office or bedroom, including ceiling, baseboards and door and window trim. For larger rooms such as a living room, basement or rooms with many surfaces to mask, such as kitchens with a lot of cabinets might require two or three rolls of tape.

For a more exact estimate, make a list and measure all of the surfaces that you are planning to mask. Include all baseboards, trim around windows and doors, ceilings, walls and fixtures, such as door knobs and hinges. Be sure to remove electrical outlet covers, vent plates and other removable fixtures before you measure and paint, so that you do not have to mask around them. This will help save time and tape.

In any case, always double-check the length of the roll of tape before you make a purchase so you can be sure you are buying the right amount.

▼ What is the shelf life of masking tape?

The recommended shelf life for masking tapes is generally one year.

▼ What temperatures are ideal for tape application?

In ideal conditions (70 degrees Fahrenheit, low humidity), tapes can maintain their performance for much longer. Very hot or cold temperatures and high humidity can contribute to reduced performance of the adhesive. Application temperatures vary for different types of tape, but most tapes will work well when the surface temperature is between 50 and 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

Removing Tape:

▼How do I choose the right tape for my project?

We make a variety of tapes so there's sure to be one that's perfect for your project. Check our Tape Selector Chart to see if a ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape is best for your project or visit the Scotch® Masking Tapes page to see if one of our Scotch® Masking Tapes would better suit your needs.

▼How do I get sharp paint lines?

The best way to get sharp paint lines is to use the appropriate ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape for the surface you are masking. Check out our Tape Selector Chart to see which ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape is best for your project.

For smoother surfaces, such as smooth painted walls and trim, ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape for Delicate Surfaces will provide super-sharp paint lines.

ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape for Multi-Surfaces provides sharp paint lines on a variety of surfaces, including those that are lightly textured, such as orange peel surfaces and tile.

Here are some other tips that will help you to achieve sharp paint lines:

- Clean the surface, and make sure it is dry and dust-free. This will help the tape stick properly.
- Secure the tape by pressing the edge down with a putty knife or a 5-in-1 tool.
- If the surface being masked is highly textured or uneven, seal the edge of the tape with the color of the base coat on the wall. This will ensure that the final coat of paint does not seep under the tape.
- Scoring the edge of the tape with a razor blade before removal will break the seal between the paint and the tape, allowing the tape to be removed easily.

This Masking Tips Video, courtesy of Amy Matthews, DIY Network TV Star and host of Sweat Equity and Blog Cabin will teach you the masking tips that are essential in achieving beautiful results.

▼What type of paints or coatings does ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape work with?

ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape works well with most water-based paints and coatings, such as acrylic, urethane, vinyl latex and enamels. It also works well with many solvent-based coatings – alkalyds, varnishes, most enamels and some polyurethanes. In addition, ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape works well with plaster, glazes, textures and metallics used in faux and decorative painting.

However, be careful when working with lacquers – nitrocellulose-based lacquers react with the adhesive composition on many painter's tapes, seemingly bonding the tape with the lacquer, making it impossible to remove. Before you start, make sure the tape you choose can be used with lacquers – higher adhesion levels such as tan masking tapes are a better choice for this particular use, because their adhesive does not react with the lacquer in this way.

▼Do I need to prime before I paint?

We strongly recommend applying a primer to the surface before painting. Priming provides a good base for paint to stick to, and can also reduce the number of coats needed. It can also reduce the likelihood of paint peeling off the surface when removing tape.

▼Can I mask a freshly painted surface?

"Freshly painted" means any surface that has been painted within 30 days. You must wait 24 hours before applying tape to a freshly painted surface and then choose a tape designed specifically for this application, such as ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape for Delicate Surfaces.

▼ Which tape is best for outdoor use?

Our tapes are versatile and for the most part can be used indoors or out. Tape choice is more a matter of the surface you're masking, temperature, exposure to sunlight and other environmental factors, and the amount of time the tape will be left on the surface. Check our Tape Selector Chart to find the right ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape for your project.

▼ Why is UV resistance important for tapes?

It is hard to avoid UV light exposure because it's part of the sun's rays. Outdoor projects and even projects done in a room with windows will likely expose tape to UV rays, which react with some adhesives. To ensure clean removal from the surface, it is often the best course to choose a tape with UV resistance, such as ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape.

▼ Will tape leave residue behind on the surface?

When used according to instructions, tape should remove cleanly from the surface. However, if tape is left on the surface for longer than the recommended time, or if a non-UV resistant masking tape is exposed to large amounts of sunlight, then the adhesive may transfer to the surface.

▼ Which tape is recommended for wallpaper?

ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape for Delicate Surfaces can be used on vinyl-coated wallpapers. It is recommended to test the product before use, since many wallpapers are not securely attached to the surface and removing the tape may cause the wallpaper to pull up.

▼ Which tape is recommended for wood floors?

3M recommends using ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape for Delicate Surfaces.

▼ Can tapes be used outdoors? What if it rains?

ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tapes can be used outdoors, and have great UV resistance over their entire removal times - even in direct sunlight. ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tapes have a sturdy construction and a water-based adhesive that can stand up to rainy weather. It is not recommended to apply tape to a damp or wet surface, but once applied the tape should stick to the surface if it rains.

▼ What other uses are there for masking tapes?

Masking tapes are remarkably versatile products. Scotch® Masking Tapes can be used for bundling, labeling, sealing and construction applications. ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tapes can be used for marking gym floors, labeling, marking sports equipment and for crafts, just to name a few.

Using Tape:

▼ How long should I wait to remove the tape from the surface?

Remove tape when the paint is dry to the touch – typically one hour after application. If you are applying multiple coats of paint, don't remove the tape until you have finished the last coat and it has had sufficient time to dry.

If you notice that the paint is pulling up with the tape, or that the paint is cracking along the paint line as you remove the tape, score along the edge of the tape with a razor blade before removing. This breaks the seal between paint and tape, ensuring a cleaner line and easier removal.

▼ How do I remove adhesive residue?

- If the tape is still intact on the surface, use a hair dryer to loosen the adhesive and remove all the backing from the adhesive
- Remove as much adhesive as possible by either rubbing the adhesive off with your finger, or by applying a fresh piece of tape over the adhesive to pull it up from the surface
- If residue remains, use a chemical-based cleaner.
 - For Scotch® Masking Tapes try one or more of the following:
 - 3M™ Adhesive Cleaner

- Citrus-based cleaners
- Hydrocarbon solvent such as turpentine; a toluene-based cleaner
- For ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tapes, try one or more of the following:
 - 3M™ Wallpaper and Paste Remover
 - Citrus-based cleaners
 - Ammonia-based cleaner

NOTE: Different tapes use different types of adhesives, so choose the cleaner carefully; test in an inconspicuous place before use.
- When using cleaners, wipe with a cheesecloth or loose-nap fabric rags to allow the adhesive residue to imbed into the fabric.
- After using cleaners, rinse surface with a generous amount of clean water.
- If the adhesive residue has been on the surface for a long time or is highly cured, scraping may be required to break up the adhesive in order to remove it.
- If ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape is used on or with a lacquer coating, the surface may react with the adhesive on the tape, making it difficult to remove. In this case, buffing or sanding may be required to remove the adhesive from the surface.

NOTE: Removing adhesive residue can put the surface it is adhered to at risk. If mechanical means (like scraping or abrading) are required to remove adhesive residue, most painted surfaces are at risk and have the potential to be damaged, regardless of the type of finish or level of cure time.

▼ Why does paint pull up or crack when tape is removed?

Often this is due to the fact that the surface wasn't primed first. Also, different paints have different compositions – some are hard and easy to clean, others are more durable and stretchy. Different kinds of paint react differently with tape. To ensure clean removal of tape, especially when thick paints are used or when painting multiple coats, score the edge of the tape before removing.

▼ What are some tips to reduce film formation of paint on the tape?

When most coatings, including paints, are applied to a surface they form a continuous film. Some paints form very elastic films, especially ones designed for extra durability or "scrubbability". When painting, the edge of the film may extend over the tape and when the paint film is very elastic it may stretch and pull away from the surface when the tape is removed. To prevent this from happening, make sure the surface is primed so the paint has a good surface to bond to. After painting, it is recommended to score the edge of the tape to break the film at the edge of the tape. This will simplify removal and help maintain a clean, professional paint line.

History:

▼ When was masking tape invented?

Masking tape was invented at 3M in 1925 by one of our scientists, Richard Drew for use by professional painters in residential and commercial painting applications. 3M invented the product now known as ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape in 1988. It was originally developed for use in two-toned painting on automobiles. ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape revolutionized the masking tape industry, because it was the first tape developed that resists UV light and allows for longer masking times.

▼ Why is ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape blue?

The medium blue color of ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape is a protectable registered trademark for Painter's Tape and is owned by 3M Company. The reason behind the color is to distinguish ScotchBlue™ Painter's Tape from the tapes of other businesses. If you don't find the answer to your question here, Contact Us.