

# Tips for Painting Ceilings

Industry standards and MPI generally advocate specifying an ASTM Level 5 drywall finish to help assure a satisfactory paint job for a ceiling.

Sometimes even an ASTM Level 5 does not guarantee a flawless finish, especially in critical lighting conditions or when using non-flat finishes.

In other instances, due to budget reasons or the skill level of the drywall contractor, the lesser Level 4 finish is more commonly used in place of the specified Level 5 finish.

So what can a painter do to achieve a flawless finish, most often required, when painting a new ceiling?



Drywall Ceiling in Commercial Area

## **Perform Final Inspection After Permanent Lighting Conditions are Set up**

Critical lighting conditions caused by either natural light from windows or from ceiling-mounted fixtures can exacerbate the problem. It is important to perform the final inspection after permanent lighting conditions for the space have been set up

to determine which defects will be visible once the project is completed.

If inspection occurs when lighting is lower than the permanent conditions of the space, “new” surface defects will become visible once brighter lighting is installed. If inspection work occurs when the lighting is brighter than the permanent conditions of the space, time and money could be wasted repairing defects that will be invisible upon completion of the project.

### **Backroll Sprayed Finish**

Even if the initial finish was sprayed, the spec should require backrolling the ceiling finish. The stipple pattern of the roller can help to hide the underlying texture variations in the drywall. A ½ inch (15 mm) nap roller may offer the best and most efficient results.

### **“Blend Back” When Painting a New Section**

Very large ceilings are finished in phases, and it’s not reasonable to get all the paint from a single batch as is generally advocated for wall coating work. Consequently, the spec should also require the painter to “blend back” the finish of each new section by shading the new topcoat back over the previous section with a spray gun.

With a flat finish, this can effectively prevent a noticeable difference between sections finished at different dates with material from different batches.

With those tips in mind, it should be noted that optimal results are still more likely to be achieved if the specification requires an ASTM Level 5 drywall finish.

*ASTM Level 5 drywall finish: application of a skim-coat of drywall compound across the entire drywall surface.*

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