

INSURING JOINT BANDITS WON'T MAR YOUR WALLS

By **Tim Carter. Special to the Tribune**

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Moving day is over and you are trying to get settled. It is late in the day and sunlight is washing your breakfast nook wall. That's funny, you didn't see those wide lines and spots on the wall when you did your walkthrough inspection. The color of the wall is OK, but it just doesn't look right.

You have been victimized by the joint bandits! Your eyes are seeing minute texture differences on the smooth drywall surface. The actual problem is called joint banding or telegraphing. The root of joint banding problems lies in light reflection. The light bouncing from your breakfast room wall is not doing so in a uniform manner.

While the surface of finished drywall often appears smooth to the touch, it is in fact composed of two entirely different surfaces. The drywall paper itself has a completely different texture than the joint and topping compound used to fill the joints and cover the nails and screws. Not only that, the paper and the joint compounds can absorb liquids unevenly. Herein lies part of the problem.

When the painter applied the wall paint, the paint film was not able to adequately disguise these different textures. When light hits these surfaces at a low angle (morning and afternoon) it reflects differently from the paper and the joint compound areas. Because the paper has a slightly rougher texture than the joint compound, the light rays from the sun are scattered by the rough texture. The light bounces more uniformly from the smoother joint compound areas of the wall surface.

Because seasonal changes cause the angle of the sun to shift in the sky, these problems can mysteriously come and go. Joint banding can become painfully obvious at night because of the recessed lighting in your ceiling. These lights cast direct light onto walls at a low angle. Hand-held lights used at night can also flush out joint banding problems.

The problem can be solved easily. The trick is to create a uniform texture on the drywall surface so that finish wall paints are absorbed at a uniform rate. There are special drywall primer/sealer paints that can be applied to new or previously painted drywall that will perform this task. These paints contain special compounds that seal the paper and the joint compound so that they absorb subsequent coats of paint evenly. These paints also contain lots of small solid particles that fill the uneven texture of the paper, making it a smooth surface. Ordinary finish wall paints, for the most part, do not possess these qualities

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are easy to apply and environmentally friendly.
1 to apply the finish coat of paint the same day.

Try to use flat finish wall paints whenever possible. These paints tend to have a rougher texture than glossy paints. This rough texture enables them to trap the light rays and scatter them as they leave the surface of the wall. This scattering effect can often hide very small imperfections. Gloss paints often magnify wall defects.

Write to Tim Carter, c/o The Chicago Tribune, P.O. Box 36352, Cincinnati, Ohio 45236-0352. Or, contact him on the Internet at askthebuilder.com.

For a listing of manufacturers of special drywall primers and other helpful drywall decorating tips, send \$2 and your name and address to Tim Carter at the above address. Ask for Builder Bulletin No. 44.

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