

What is Limewash?

Limewash is a very ancient paint made from limestone which has been crushed, burnt and slaked with water to make lime putty. The lime putty is matured for several months before being thinned with water to make limewash. Limewash is naturally white and forms a complex crystalline matrix which has a matt, slightly chalky appearance. It is coloured with pigments and can be used internally or externally where it works best on porous surfaces such as a traditional lime plaster, lime render, stone and brick. Unlike modern barrier paints, limewash works by sinking into the surface. It hardens by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to form crystals of calcium carbonate which give the limewash its deep matt appearance and protective qualities. When used on porous surfaces, the colour will deepen if there is any dampness in the background material, hence its attractive shading.

Tallow (animal fat) or raw linseed oil are traditional additives which help to improve its watershedding qualities when used externally.

As it is a water-based paint, limewash isn't easily absorbed into less porous surfaces such as cement renders or hard gypsum plasters, and therefore it won't wear nearly as well on these. Additives such as casein (skimmed milk) can be added to help it bond to these less porous materials.

The benefits of limewash

Breathability The way older dwellings are built affects the best way to repair and decorate them. Old buildings were traditionally of solid wall construction, rendered with breathable lime mortars and limewashed. These materials reduce the effects of condensation and allow the moisture in the walls to evaporate to the outside. Misguidedly trying to seal the weather out of traditional structures can lead to dampness, rot and condensation problems, causing decay in structural timbers and damage to the cob and stone walls themselves.

Special properties: Being alkaline, limewash is anti-bacterial and insecticidal (woodworm and death-watch beetle hate it) - hence its wide usage on farm buildings. It also has fireproofing qualities - all the houses on the Thames were lime plastered and limewashed after the first great fire of London in 1212 as a precautionary measure.

Limewash Colours

Our limewash range is coloured with both Natural and Manufactured pigments. The natural pigments are clay and silica, coloured with iron oxides in the earth. They are mined all over the world but some take their names from their primary locations - Sienna, and Umbria for instance. Natural pigments have less colouring intensity than manufactured pigments which are produced mainly from iron oxides to replicate traditional earth pigments. These are much stronger in hue, consistent and very durable.

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Limewash

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Limewash Colours

Manufactured Pigments



Limewash Colours

Natural Pigments



Please Note
The colours on this chart are matched as closely as possible to the limewashes, but due to the printing process we cannot guarantee an exact colour match. We recommend that you purchase a sample pot to test the colour.

USING LIMEWASH

This is a brief guideline only. Full technical sheets are available from our office or on our website.

Safety

Limewash is caustic. Protect eyes and skin from contact.

Coverage

A litre of limewash will cover 3 - 6 m² for one coat, depending on the smoothness and porosity of the surface being limewashed. Apply thinly.

Porosity

Limewash works best on a porous surface such as new lime render and plaster. Casein paint can be added to improve adhesion on less porous surfaces. When in doubt test a sample area.

Preparation

Remove any loose particles, dust, dirt, lichen etc. with stiff brush and wash down. Treat mould growth with a weak fungicide (dilute bleach) and rinse off well.

Damping

On dry surfaces spray the area with water before limewashing as this prevents the water in the limewash from being sucked out too quickly on application.

Application

Please whisk the limewash thoroughly before use as the putty will settle out. It will look transparent on application but will dry opaque. Coloured limewashes dry to a much lighter shade than the wet limewash.

4 coats are recommended on new external lime render, 3 coats on new internal lime plaster. Ideally leave each coat to cure for a minimum of 1 day. A thin coat curing slowly in the presence of moisture will form a more crystalline, hard-wearing surface compared to a chalky finish if a thick coat dries out too quickly. After the initial carbonation and curing limewash will continue to strengthen for several weeks.

Weather

Do not apply in low temperatures or when there is a risk of frost. Protect external limewash from strong sunlight when it is drying.

Ultramarine Pigment

Ultramarine pigment will fade in wet limewash. Please use limewash which contain ultramarine within a week.

Storage

Please store tubs of limewash in frost-free conditions.