

Paint Comparison Report

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Executive Summary

We chose to compare four brands of paint. According to *Consumer Reports*, painting is “one of the most popular home-improvement projects in the U.S.” Painting “can be one of the easiest and least expensive ways to update the look of a room.” (“Interior,” 2007). That’s why Jeri Basko, one of our group members, decided to paint the interior of her home.

We concluded that, for our purposes, Behr[®] was the best value. Behr performed better than the other paints in *Consumer Reports* ratings and in our own consumer survey. When mileage expenses are included, Behr costs less per gallon. Therefore, we recommend that Jeri purchase Behr paint for her project.

Introduction

We chose to compare four brands of paint because Jeri will be painting the interior of her home. The other members of my group were Dennis Dexter and Gustavo Pérez.

*“Painting ‘can be one of the easiest and least expensive ways to update the look of a room.’”
 (“Interior,” 2007)*

The four brands we compared were Behr[®], from Home Depot[®]; Sears[®]; Sherwin-Williams[®]; and Valspar[®] from Lowe’s[®].*

The four variables we chose for the comparison were availability, cost, durability and variety.

We chose several methods to research our products. We created an online survey to determine the opinions of fellow consumers. We interviewed four painting professionals. We researched manufacturer specifications, magazine articles and Internet resources.

We concluded that Behr was the best value. Behr performed better than the other paints in *Consumer Reports* ratings and in our own consumer survey. When mileage expenses are included, Behr costs less per gallon. Therefore, we recommend that Jeri purchase Behr paint for her project.

Sherwin-Williams also rated highly in our survey and our expert testimony.

In the next sections, I will detail the methods we used to research our project and the results of that research.

* Behr, The Home Depot and Home Depot are registered trademarks of Homer TLC, Inc. Sears is a registered trademark of the Sears Holding Corporation. Sherwin-Williams is a registered trademark of The Sherwin-Williams Company. Valspar and Lowe’s are registered trademarks of LF, LCC.

Research Methods

This section of the report details the research methods we used to compare our four brands of paint, the online survey, professional interviews, manufacturer specifications and other research.

Online Survey

Our survey was administered using an online survey service called SurveyMonkey.com (<http://surveymonkey.com/>). We chose SurveyMonkey because it is easy to use and easy to access.

Questions

The questions were designed to find the following:

- The experience level of the respondent.
- The method used to choose the paint.
- The most important criteria in choosing paint.
- The respondent's favorite choice of our four paint brands
- Any other paint the respondent would purchase.

To see a sample survey, please go to Appendix 11 and Appendix 12.

Sample

175 people responded to the survey. 174 completed the entire survey. A different number of people responded to each question, details are listed in the online survey results, Appendix 4 to Appendix 36.

The sample group was self-selected from the following groups:

- friends and family of our group members
- members of several University of Southern Maine (USM) list-serves
- readers of the online weblog Bitchypoo (<http://bitchypoo.com>)
- readers of the online weblog Musings of Lanna Lee Maheux (<http://lannaleemaheux.com/musings.html>)

Open-Ended Questions

Two of the questions were open-ended and two questions had fill-in responses. To track the trends, we used Microsoft Excel.

Scope

We had a limited amount of time to research and prepare our report, which led us to skip testing our survey. Because of this, two of the questions were designed poorly and did not give us the data we wanted. However, all of the questions gave us enough information to make an informed decision.

Professional Interview

To determine what kind of paints professionals use for their projects, we each interviewed a professional painter.

We wanted to determine the following:

- experience
- credentials
- preferences

The results will be detailed in the next section, Results, starting on page 5.

Manufacturer Specifications and Other Research

Our other research included a *Consumer Reports* article, company brochures and online research. The four variables: durability, cost, variety and availability, influenced how we interpreted the research.

- **Durability:** How long will the paint last? What is the coverage?
- **Cost:** How much does it cost per gallon? How much does it cost to drive to the store?
- **Variety:** How many colors are available? What kinds of finishes are available?
- **Availability:** How far away is the store? Would anything need to be special-ordered?

As you will see in the next section, Behr continually performed at the same level or above the other paint brands.

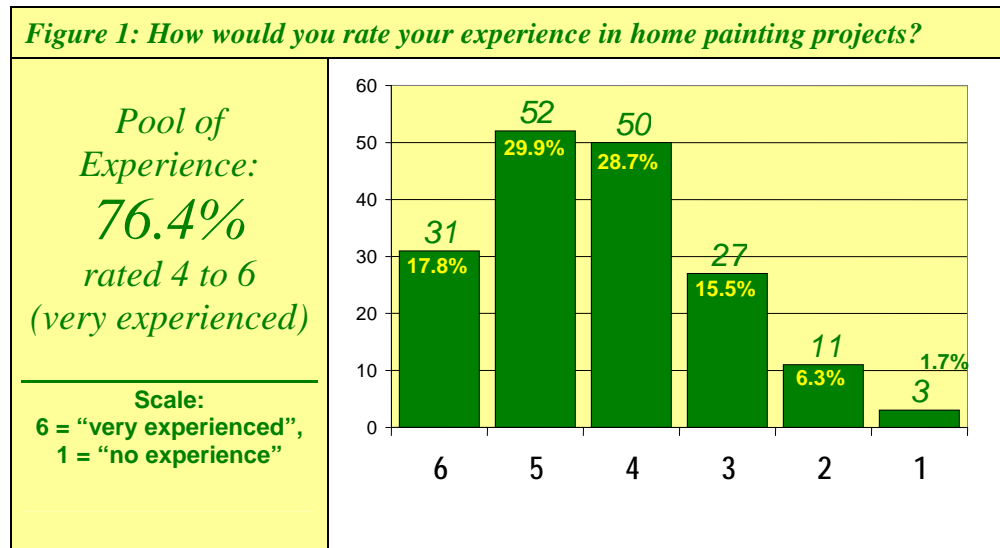
Results

Online Survey

Here are some highlights of our online survey. A complete report can be found in the appendix, from Appendix 4 to Appendix 9.

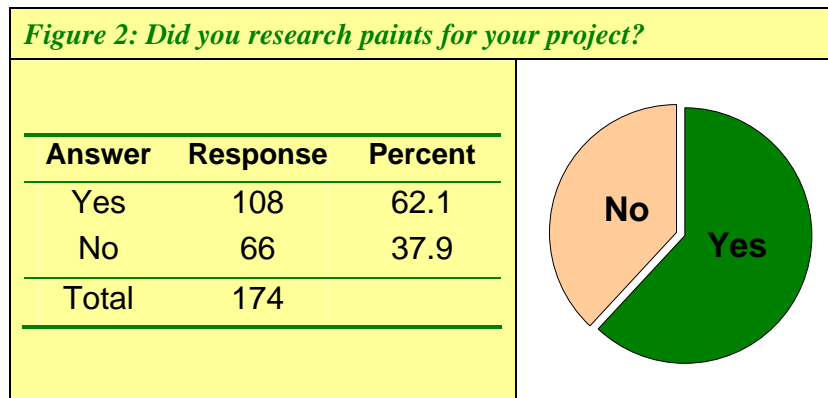
How would you rate your experience in home painting projects?

174 people responded to this question. As you can see by Figure 1, most of our respondents had experience with home painting projects. 17.8 percent were very experienced, with 29.9 percent rating themselves just below.



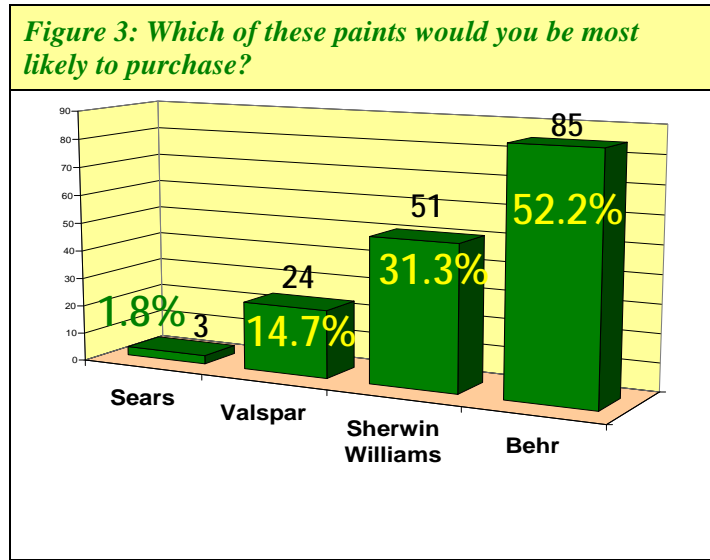
Did you research paints for your project?

174 people responded to this question. Most people researched paints for their project.



Which of these paints would you be most likely to purchase?

163 people responded to this question. Behr tops the list at 52.2 percent (Figure 3, below.)



Other ratings

When we asked for a rating on a scale between one to four, Sherwin-Williams was rated the best, with a score of 1.67, (Table 1, below). Behr was in second place at 1.91. However, Behr received more scores of 1 (meaning “best”) totaling 62. Sherwin-Williams received 55 “best” ratings. Because less total people filled in rating for Sherwin-Williams, its overall average is higher.

Table 1: Paint Rating Chart

	1 - Best		2		3		4 - Worst		Rating Average	Response Count
Behr	62	42.5%	51	34.9%	17	11.6%	16	11.0%	1.91	146
Sears	2	1.8%	47	41.6%	47	41.6%	17	15.0%	2.70	113
Sherwin Williams	55	44.7%	56	45.5%	9	7.3%	3	2.4%	1.67	123
Valspar	16	13.6%	42	35.6%	42	35.6%	18	15.3%	2.53	118
Totals	135	102.5%	196	157.6%	115	96.1%	54	43.7%		

Notice that Behr has more “worst” ratings than Sherwin-Williams, this increased Sherwin-Williams’ average. However, as we saw in Figure 3, 52.2 percent of our respondents would be more likely to purchase Behr paint.

Professional Interviews

For our expert opinions, we each interviewed a professional painter to determine their paint preferences.

Interviewees

We interviewed the following people:

- **Joel Hersom**, General Contractor, interviewed by Gustavo Pérez on June 7, 2007.
- **Merrie Mills**, Remodeling and Painting Guru, interviewed by Jeri Basko on June 10, 2007.
- **Larry Ricker**, Carpenter at USM Facilities Management, interviewed by Lanna Lee Maheux-Quinn on June 6, 2007
- **Michael Smith**, General Painting Contractor, interviewed by Dennis Dexter on June 10, 2007.

Questions

We asked the following questions:

- How long have you been in the painting industry, or been painting?
- Do you need any credentials?
- How do you choose what paint to use?
- Which of these four paints is the best and why? Behr, Sears, Sherwin Williams and Valspar.
- Would you choose a different paint and why?

Answers

- Experience: Two of the painters, Hersom and Smith, have 20 years experience. Larry Ricker has 12 years experience, and Merrie Mills did not specify.
- Preferences: Two experts prefer Sherwin-Williams, one prefers Behr, and one prefers Benjamin Moore. (See Figure 1, below.)

Table 2: Expert Preferences

	Hersom	Mills	Ricker	Smith
Behr	x			
Benjamin Moore		x		
Sherwin-Williams			x	x

- Credentials: Only one of the experts had credentials. The other professionals learned their skills with on-the-job training and experience.

Each expert shows loyalty to their preferred brand. Larry Ricker (personal communication, June 6, 2007) said, “You got to start at the top somewhere, and I start with Sherwin-Williams. I say that Sherwin-Williams is best, all the others are second.” Joel Hersom (personal communication, June 7, 2007) said, “Personally I prefer Behr, their price is reasonable and they have a very good selection of colors...” Merrie Mills (personal communication, June 10, 2007) said, “I only use Benjamin Moore.... I like the finish of the paint, the colors and the consistency. They are more expensive, but they are worth it.”

“Personally I prefer Behr, their price is reasonable and they have a very good selection of colors...”
Joel Hersom

Sherwin-Williams is preferred by half of our expert painters. However, Michael Smith (personal communication, June 10, 2007), who chose Sherwin-Williams, had this to say, “I will use Behr if I am unable to get Sherwin-Williams. But I would rather use Sherwin-Williams.”

For transcripts of the interviews, please go to Appendix 48 to Appendix 51.

Manufacturer Specifications

All the paints have similar manufacturer specifications (Table 2, below.)

	Cost Per Gallon	Coverage Per Gallon*	Color Variety
<i>Behr</i>	\$25	250-400	2,000+ match
<i>Sears</i>	\$23	350-400	Unknown, match
<i>Sherwin-Williams</i>	\$35-\$42	350-400	1,400
<i>Valspar</i>	\$27	400	Unknown, match
<i>*by square footage (durability)</i>			

Behr costs \$2 more per gallon than Sears, but it has a known color palate of 2,000 plus colors. Behr, Sears and Valspar all offer color matching.

The one variable where Behr falls short is coverage per gallon at 250-400 square feet. However, none of the other paints go over 400 square feet. If we choose the right type of Behr paint, we will get comparable coverage.

Other Research

Our other research consisted of the following:

- *Consumer Reports* ratings and advice
- Distances from Lebanon to various stores
- Mileage rates for trips to and from Lebanon

Consumer Reports

In March of 2007, *Consumer Reports* (“Interior”) published ratings for three types of interior paints: low-luster, flat, and semigloss. Behr topped the list for each one (Table 4, below.)

Table 4: From Consumer Reports Quick Pick Ratings (“Interior,” 2007)

	Low- Luster			Flat			Semigloss		
	Price	Score	Note	Price	Score	Note	Price	Score	Note
<i>Behr</i>	\$24	88	①, ②	\$22	85		\$25	85	②
<i>Sears</i>	\$24	77							
<i>Valspar</i>	\$24	75		\$22	80		\$22	82	

Note: ① = Better one-coat hiding, ② = Glossier than labeled

Sherwin-Williams was not listed in the quick pick ratings.

The only paints that received a “CR Best Buy” rating for all types of finish were Dutch Boy (not one of our brands) and Behr. Behr was named one of the “best” in the categories “best chance for covering in one coat,” and “best for high-traffic areas”

According to *Consumer Reports*, Behr is prone to fading with a rating of “poor” for all types of finish. The only paint on our list that has good ratings for fading is Valspar; the low-luster is rated as “very good”; the flat is rated as “excellent”; and the semigloss is rated as “good.” Valspar was named one of the “best for sunny spaces.” If paint fading were a concern, we might have decided to go with the Valspar paint.

Distance and Mileage

We based our “availability” variable on the distance Jeri would need to travel to purchase her paint. Jeri lives in Lebanon, Maine, which is equidistant to stores in Maine and New Hampshire.

As you can see in Table 5 (right), Behr is the best value at \$31.72 per gallon of paint. If we purchase two or more gallons at a time, Behr will remain the better value.

<i>Table 5: Distance and mileage for paint</i>				
	Closest Distance (miles)	Mileage (round trip)	Price per gallon	Total Price per trip
<i>Behr</i>	8	\$6.72	\$25	\$31.72
<i>Sears</i>	21	\$17.64	\$23	\$40.64
<i>Sherwin-Williams</i>	5	\$4.20	\$35	\$39.20
<i>Valspar</i>	22	\$18.48	\$27	\$45.48

Another consideration is the amount of time spent traveling to the store to purchase the paint. Jeri would spend less time driving to and from The Home Depot than Lowe’s and Sears, (Table 6 below.)




<i>Table 6: Time in minutes</i>			
Behr	Sears	Sherwin-Williams	Valspar
30	100	25	70

Conclusion

We conclude that Behr is the best paint for the following reasons:

- **Excellent ratings:** Behr topped *Consumer Reports'* quick pick list for each type of indoor paint (low-luster, flat, semigloss.)
- **Best Buy:** Behr was given the CR Best Buy rating for each one of its indoor paints.
- **Low price:** Behr costs less per gallon.
- **Most likely:** 52.2 percent of our survey respondents would be most likely to purchase Behr.
- **Favored brand:** One of our experts preferred Behr. Another would use Behr if his preferred brand were unavailable.

Table 7: Fun Survey Facts

	49.9% wished we included Benjamin Moore
	32.5 % say color a factor when choosing paint
	37.5 % listed coverage as a criteria

Sherwin-Williams also rated highly in our survey and our expert testimony. However, based on price per gallon and missing *Consumer Reports* ratings, we felt that Behr was the better buy.

Recommendation

I recommended that Jeri purchase Behr paints for her painting project. Behr has excellent *Consumer Reports* ratings and the nearest store is close to her home.

Sherwin-Williams also rated highly with our experts and in our online survey. However, based on price per gallon and missing *Consumer Reports* ratings, we felt that Behr was the better buy.

When you consider travel time and mileage, Behr costs less per gallon than other paints. Furthermore, Behr offers excellent coverage in their low-luster paints, and will work well for Jeri's high-traffic areas.

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