



# Paint an Iron Railing

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Iron railings are usually professionally finished before installation and, if you avoid chipping the finish, they will last for many years. The posts are usually made with hollow tubing rather than solid metal. Typically rust begins where the railing posts are embedded in concrete or where the finish has been chipped. To prevent rust, you should scuff-sand and re-coat the bottom 2 inches of the posts every year, touch up any chips as soon as you notice them and repaint the entire railing every five to eight years.

## Tools & Materials Checklist

- Goggles & protective clothing
- Vinegar
- Scrub brush
- Metal scraper
- Sanding pad accessory for drill
- Sanding discs (coarse, medium and fine)
- Drop cloths
- Emery cloths
- Dust mask
- Rust neutralizer
- Angled sash paintbrush
- Paint conditioner (optional)
- Wire brush
- Paint brush & small roller
- Rust-inhibiting primer
- Rust-inhibiting paint
- Electric drill w/wire brush drill accessory



### **Tip: Weather**

Don't tackle more than you can do in a single day and work when the weather is warm and dry. Corrosion starts immediately on bare metal so plan to paint the railing *immediately* after sanding and other surface preparations. Avoid painting when surfaces are damp, when humidity is above 80%, when the temperature may fall below 50 degrees or in the direct sun.

### **Step 1. Prepare the Area... and Yourself**

Take the proper steps to protect the environment and your health. Cover the area under the railings with drop cloths to catch paint chips and dust. Wear a tight-fitting dust mask, goggles, a painter's hat and clothing that covers your skin.

### **Step 2. Clean the Metal**

Use a 50/50 vinegar/water solution and a scrub brush to remove all dirt and grime from the metal railing.

### **Step 3. Scrape and Scuff-Sand**

Use a metal scraper and a wire brush to remove loose paint or flaking rust. Then lightly sand all surfaces that you intend to paint. The purpose of scuff-sanding, as this process is called, is to remove all gloss and slightly roughen the surface for improved paint bonding. More aggressive sanding/grinding may be required to smooth a rough or rusty surface.

### **Step 4. Prepare Rusted Areas**

There are two basic ways to deal with rust: remove it or chemically neutralize it. Removal generally yields a smoother surface but neutralizing lasts longer and is easier to do.

- **To Remove Rust:** Sand or grind away rust using an electric drill equipped with a wire brush and/or a sanding pad and abrasive disks; or for light rust hand-sand with emery cloth (a cloth-backed abrasive sheet, which holds up better than paper-backed sandpaper).
- **To Neutralize Rust:** Use a scraper, wire brush, or coarse emery cloth to remove any bubbled paint and loose rust. Then brush on a rust neutralizer, such as Rust-Oleum's Rust Reformer, according the directions on the label.

Steps 5 & 6 on back

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## 5. Apply Primer

Brush, roll, or spray on a rust-inhibiting (direct-to-metal) primer. For best results apply two coats. If you spray or roll on the primer, back-brush to work the paint into the surface and create a better bond. Back-brushing is the process of brushing over just-applied paint before it begins to set.



### **Tip: Rust Prevention**

Despite careful preparation rust eventually reappears. The better you seal the surface from moisture and air, the longer it will be before rust shows its ugly face. For extra protection, apply a paint conditioner such as Penetrol to the surface before using an aerosol primer. If you plan to use primer from a can, mix it with the primer according to the label directions.

## 6. Apply Topcoat

Apply a topcoat of paint using aerosol cans, a roller, or a brush. Spray paint is expensive and wasteful but gets the job done fast; rolling is also a great way to get the paint on the surface fast. In both cases, however, you'll probably want or need to back-brush to remove drips and level the paint.



### **Tip: Using Aerosol Cans**

Avoid spraying when there is any wind, and hang a drop cloth or large piece of cardboard behind the railing to catch the overspray. Hold the can about 8 to 12 inches from your work. Keep the can moving and apply several light coats to minimize dripping.

After using aerosol paint (or primer), tip the can upside down and depress the nozzle for a few seconds until paint stops coming out, and wipe off the nozzle with a cloth. That way the nozzle won't be clogged the next time you use it.

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