

ACHIEVING A LEVEL 5 FINISH ON PLASTERBOARD SURFACES



What is a Level 5 Finish?

There are 3 levels of finish defined in AS/NZS2589 for the installation and finishing of plasterboard. These are named Level 3 to Level 5 inclusive, with Level 5 being the highest standard.

Generally, residential applications are prepared to a Level 4 Finish unless a higher or lower level of finish is agreed to by all contracting parties.

AS/NZS 2589 states that a Level 5 Finish should be used wherever gloss or semi-gloss paints are to be used, and where critical lighting conditions occur with painted surfaces such as large flat wall and ceiling areas, where severe glancing light will occur from large window openings or skylights, or where artificial silhouette and spot lighting is to be used.

The most common method of achieving a Level 5 Finish is by way of 'skim coating'. Skim coating is a term used to describe a thin finish coat, trowelled or airless sprayed onto the prepared plasterboard surface and then lightly sanded to achieve a smooth and even finish. It is normally less than 1mm in thickness and is applied over the entire surface to fill imperfections in the joint work, smooth the paper texture and provide a uniform surface for decorating.

Achieving a Level 5 Finish

Gyprock® has trialled several possible methods of achieving a Level 5 Finish on walls and ceilings and this data sheet discusses methods that are considered practical for typical on-site situations.

It is important to note that achieving a satisfactory 'Level of Finish' is dependent on many factors, including appropriate preparation and the skill of the applicators. Therefore Gyprock cannot guarantee in any way the coating process or any other processes used to achieve the desired level of finish.

PREPARATION

A Level 5 Finish cannot be achieved without a high degree of preparatory work. It is critical to achieving a successful outcome that each of these requirements is reached and checked prior to proceeding to the next step.

Table 1 (on page 2) summarises the various preparation requirements for installations on timber and steel substrates. Detailed installation information is provided in the Gyprock Residential and Commercial Installation Guides.

The following points should also be noted:

- All framing/substrate must be prepared in accordance with the Gyprock Residential Installation Guide and/or AS/NZS 2589:1 'Gypsum linings in residential and light commercial construction – Application and Finishing.'
- The maximum permissible frame deviation is 3mm. Carefully check and correct any problem areas before proceeding.
- Plasterboard must be applied horizontally except that a single sheet may be fixed vertically where it covers the whole wall. Horizontal sheeting also minimises the effect of glancing light, reduces jointing by up to 25% and places wall joints at a more convenient level for jointing.

- All joints must be set and finished in accordance with the Gyprock Residential Installation Guide and/or AS/NZS 2589:1. Recess and butt joints should be taped and set with a three coat system. Internal angles should be taped and set with a two coat system. External angles should be set with a metal bead and three coat system. Fastener heads and accessories should receive three coats of compound.
- All indents or gouges should be filled to a flat finish in the plane of the surface of the board. The joint compound should be carefully sanded to a smooth finish free of tool marks and ridges.
- Wall and ceiling linings must be kept free of any dirt, oil or other foreign matter which could cause a lack of bonding.

METHOD 1 – SPRAY APPLICATION

Recommended Compounds

- **Gyprock Ultra-AP™ all-purpose compound**, mixed to a consistency suitable for spray application. Suggestion: 3.0 litres of water per 15kg.
- or
- **Gyprock Pre-Mixed Total Joint Cement all-purpose compound**, mixed to a consistency suitable for spray application. Suggestion: 2.3 litres of water per 15kg.

Spray unit (suggested)

- Wagner ProSpray 3.39 or Titan Performance 1650e (or similar airless spray equipment).
- Airless spray tip: 19 thou - 23 thou.

PROCEDURE

Gyprock has found that the following techniques provided the best results during testing:

1. Install framing and plasterboard to Level 5 requirements.
2. Prepare equipment and compound mix. Before spraying the compound, the filter should be removed from the spray gun. Wagner ProSpray 3.39 or Titan Performance 1650e (or similar airless spray) should be running at 3000 PSI or as recommended by the manufacturer.
3. The first coat should be sprayed horizontally. The best spraying distance is 1.5-2.0 metres between the spray tip and the surface with overlapping 30-50%. Trialling the spraying technique and the compound dispensing from the nozzle on a test surface is highly recommended.
4. The second coat should be sprayed vertically.
5. The third coat should be sprayed horizontally.
6. Sand and prepare for paint finish. Depending on the desired finish sanding may not be required. If sanding is required, use 150 to 180 grit sand paper.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- To avoid 'tram tracking', hold the spray gun nozzle approximately 1.5-2.0 metres away from the surface. This may vary depending on the viscosity of the compound.
- Drying time will vary depending on ambient temperature. Each spray coat should be dry before applying the subsequent coat.
- The number of coats will depend on total coat thickness required, however best results are achieved by applying thin coats, slowly building the thickness. This generally results in less sanding and there is less chance of slumping (runs).

METHOD 2 – ROLLER APPLICATION

Recommended Compounds

- Gyprock Ultra-AP all-purpose compound**, mixed to a consistency suitable for roller application. Suggestion: 2.3 litres of water per 15kg
- or
- Gyprock Pre-Mixed Total Joint Cement all-purpose compound**, mixed to a consistency suitable for roller application. Suggestion: 1.75 litres of water per 15kg.

Water should be added to the compound gradually until the desired consistency is achieved. The goal is to have a compound thin enough so that it can be rolled smoothly, without sagging, with a paint roller.

Suggested Roller Equipment

- 13mm long nap roller

The roller cover should be fully cleaned before use and should be free from dirt, debris and loose fibres. It will minimise appearance of scratches on the surface after trowelling with a broad knife.

PROCEDURE

- Using a long nap roller cover (13mm), roll the compound evenly on the surface to be skimmed. It is best to work in small sections of 0.5-1.0 metre.
- Using a wide broad knife, remove any excess compound to achieve a smooth flat finish while the compound is still wet. The key to roll skimming a wall is to not leave excess compound on the surface to avoid more sanding. Roll skimming works the compound into pores of the plasterboard sheet to achieve a similar consistency to that of joints and screw heads.
- Once the compound is completely dry for 5-6 hours, depending on the temperature/humidity conditions, lightly sand using 150 to 180 grit sandpaper, to remove any minor imperfections. A good light source aimed along the surface is necessary to see any imperfections that were not covered by roller skim coating. If minor imperfections can't be removed by further sanding, application of second coat of roller skim (Step 1-3) should be considered before final decoration.

PAINTING AND DECORATION

Finishes applied to plasterboard surfaces can have a significant effect on the perceived quality of the installation, particularly where critical lighting conditions exist.

- Textured or heavy patterned finishes tend to hide imperfections
- Matt finishes minimise imperfection visibility
- Semi-gloss and gloss finishes highlight imperfections
- Light colours are less likely to show imperfections and impact damage

Gyprock recommends paint systems consisting of one coat of a plasterboard sealer followed by two coats of finishing paint. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for application and recoating.

Table 1 – Summary of Installation Requirements for Level 5 Finish.

Level of Finish	Max. Frame Alignment Deviation mm	Horizontal Wall Sheet Fixing	Joint between Frame Members & Back-block				Adhesive & Fastener Fixing	Screw Only Fixing	Approved Internal Corner Fixing System	Stopping & External Corner Metals	Jointing & Finishing Butt & Recess Joints Internal & External Corners	
			Butt	Recessed	Butt	Recessed						
Gyprock Installation Requirements for Category 'A' Timber												
5	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	✓	or	*	✓	✓	Tape Coat + Second Coat + Finish Coat + Skim Coat to the entire surface
Gyprock Installation Requirements for Category 'B' Timber												
5	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	✓	or	*	✓	✓	Tape Coat + Second Coat + Finish Coat + Skim Coat to the entire surface
Gyprock Installation Requirements for Steel Frame												
5	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	✓	or	*	✓	✓	Tape Coat + Second Coat + Finish Coat + Skim Coat to the entire surface

Level 5 – * Screw only fixing may be used when fastening to metal furring system.

Where a butt joint in a wall is less than 400mm long and is located more than 2 metres from the floor, there may be no need to provide back-blocking.

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MANUFACTURED FOR LIFE WARRANTY

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HEALTH & SAFETY

Information on any known health risks of our products and how to handle them safely is on their package and/or the documentation accompanying them. Additional information is listed in the Material Safety Data sheet – available from gyprock.com.au