

Removing or plastering over artex

Artex is a water-based covering, usually used to decorate ceilings, and generally brought to a textured finish with the use of a brush or roller.

Some older artex may contain asbestos and it is extremely unwise to sand down or scrape without seeking the advice of an asbestos specialist. Contact your local council for help with this.

Artex can be “steamed” off using a wallpaper steamer. This is again very messy and also very slow. It cannot be done at speed or with the steam plate left in one area too long...if it is, there is a possibility of damaging the ceiling or wall and the artex just returns to liquid form.

This will enable you to soak and strip without damaging either yourself or the surface you are working on.

The easiest way to remove artex is with this amazing product. Simply paint over the artex, on a horizontal or vertical surface, and scrape off when softened.





Artex can also be plastered over. Firstly make absolutely sure that there are no flaking or loose sections of the artex, or indeed ceiling/wall. Then remove all obviously “high spots” of artex, where the stipples hang down. The wall or ceiling can then be painted with a coat of PVA adhesive, which can be bought in gallon containers from the builder’s merchants or larger DIY stores

Dilute the PVA at 1 to 1 with water and stir well. Paint this on the ceiling/wall with a large emulsion brush. This can be left to dry, which will only take about an hour. Make sure you have covered **the entire** surface. Untouched areas will produce plastered areas that will be hard almost as soon as the plaster touches them!



We suggest two coats of this pva solution will give an excellent seal to the ceiling. Artex is very porous indeed and “skim” plaster goes hard very quickly. The pva will not only help the adhesion of the plaster, but it will dramatically slow down the rate of moisture absorption, giving you more time to “work” the surface.

It is a good idea to wear an old pair of rubber gloves when dealing with plaster. It is not good for your skin! Place dust sheets everywhere and be careful where you stand. If wet plaster gets on your shoes, before you know it the house is covered. If you are attempting a ceiling try and get hold of a couple of milk crates, they are just the right height, and very stable when upturned.



All of the tools and materials on display here can be found at [Screwfix.com](https://www.screwfix.com) For those you cannot see, use their search box on site.

Skim plaster is bought in bags of 25kg (Smaller bags can be bought for patching) and the mixing instructions are on the bag. Mix to a creamy consistency using an electric drill on slow speed and a “paddle” attachment that can be bought at most diy stores. Apply to the ceiling/wall using a hand held board (hawk) and a plasterers trowel. No more than two trowels full should be placed on the hawk, then cut into a small section of this with the trowel held at 90 degrees to the hawk. Tilt the hawk towards you while pushing and “scooping” the trowel and plaster away. Once you have the plaster on the trowel, spread it evenly on the surface. Do not attempt to smooth it at this stage.

Before attempting the above, we suggest you first mix up an eggcup full of skim. Place this on an off cut of some kind that you have prepared with some pva. Spread it out and mark the time it takes to go firm but not hard. This is the point at which skim can be made smooth and the trowel marks will disappear. Once skim is hard the only way of smoothing it is by sanding. As with all of our projects, the money spent on practice is a tiny amount compared to the amount it takes to put a job right. “Stop end” beads can be purchased from stores. These are galvanised or stainless beads, which can be fixed to the surface and allow you to divide your plastering area into smaller, more manageable sections. Their flat top gives you an edge to work to and finishes flush with the surface of the plaster. When decorated they are not visible.



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Start smoothing where you started skimming, you will have to repeat this procedure over the surface two or three times to get it absolutely smooth. When the plaster gets quite hard, you can spray or flick a brush with some water on the surface, this will give you an extra couple of minutes to work the surface.

Use a half-inch, wet (water), soft paintbrush to define corners and the abutment of the plastered surface to any other. Wipe any mess on non-porous surfaces with a wet cloth, take up the lumps etc and it will dry to a fine dust. This can be wiped again and will go. Leave any mess on porous surfaces until the lumps are dry and then pick them off.

The most important things to remember are:

- 1: Do not attempt to put too much plaster on either hawk or trowel.
- 2: Spread the plaster to a ceiling not directly above your face.
- 3: Get a covering on that is uniform in thickness (no more than 5mm) so the whole area goes firm at the same time.
- 4: Do not attempt too large an area at once or mix too great an amount.
- 5: Wash your tools & buckets down regularly and especially between mixes.

6: It is impossible to get plaster smooth on its first application to the ceiling. Do not attempt to do this. Get an area covered uniformly and wait until it starts to get firm. Then it can be smoothed.

7: Plastering is very hard work indeed. Mostly because of the speed it has to be carried out at & also because it involves a lot of body movement. Please make sure you have divided the room onto manageable areas. You really do only want to do this once.

For an absolute novice we would suggest that a ceiling area of 2m x 2m is the maximum that should be attempted in one go and a wall area of 2.4m x 2.5m.

Make life easy with this mixing bucket and paddle which fits in all electric drills

