

Painting Brick House Pros and Cons: The Honest Guide

What Paint Does to Brick, What It Costs to Do, and What It
Costs to Undo

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Chapter 1: Painting Brick House Pros and Cons — Why This Question Won't Die

Of all the questions homeowners ask me, "should I paint my brick house" might be the most loaded. It's not really a masonry question — it's a question about taste, about trends, about what the neighbors did, about that house on the corner that went from dated red brick to crisp white and suddenly looks like a magazine. And underneath it, it's a question about a material decision that's effectively permanent. Because here's the thing nobody tells you at the paint store: painting brick is a one-way door. You can paint it in a weekend. Getting back to bare brick takes a specialist, weeks of work, and a bill that'll make your eyes water.

I'm going to do something in this book that most contractors won't. I'm going to give you the honest case FOR painting brick first — the real advantages, fairly stated, no strawman. Then the honest case against. Then what proper prep actually requires, what it costs in 2026, what the alternatives are, and what paint removal costs when the next owner wants the brick back. And at the end, I'll tell you straight what I'd do if it

were my house. That's the deal with these books: both sides, then my opinion, clearly labeled as my opinion.

One thing before we start: I'm a mason, not a painter. I don't sell paint jobs. I repair what paint does to brick, and I strip paint off brick for people who inherited somebody else's decision. That gives me a particular view of this topic — I've seen the twenty-year consequences up close. But it doesn't make the pro-paint side dishonest. There are legitimate reasons people paint brick, and I'm going to lay them out straight.

Chapter 2: The Honest Case for Painting Brick

Let's steelman the pro-paint side, because these are real arguments made by real homeowners, and they deserve a fair hearing.

Curb appeal and modernization. This is the big one, and it's legitimate. A 1970s red-brick ranch can look dated, and a coat of white, cream, or charcoal paint transforms it. In trend-forward neighborhoods, painted brick is the look — the comps with painted brick sell, the buyers want it, and the transformation is dramatic for the money. Nobody should pretend aesthetics don't matter. Your house is probably the biggest thing you own, and wanting it to look the way you want it to look is a completely valid reason to do something to it.

Covering mismatched or damaged brick. Sometimes the brick itself is the problem. Additions built in different decades with brick that doesn't match. Repairs where the replacement brick is close but not close enough. Spalled or discolored brick that would cost a fortune to replace unit by unit. Paint is the great unifier — one coat and the

mismatched patchwork becomes a single clean surface. For a house with genuinely ugly or irreparably mismatched brick, paint can be the most cost-effective facelift available.

A sealing argument. Brick is porous, and the pro-paint case says a quality masonry coating seals the surface against water intrusion. There's a kernel of truth here: a properly applied breathable masonry coating does reduce water absorption at the surface. I'll complicate this in the next chapter — the difference between "breathable masonry coating" and "whatever was on sale at the paint store" is the whole ballgame — but the aspiration is real. Done right, with the right product, a coating can protect a vulnerable wall.

Cost versus alternatives. Painting a brick house runs \$3,500 to \$10,500 professionally, averaging around \$7,000. Compare that to re-bricking a house, replacing discolored brick across a whole elevation, or residing in another material — paint is the cheapest dramatic exterior transformation you can buy. For a homeowner who wants a new look without a five-figure masonry bill, the economics are genuinely attractive.

Personal expression. Some people just don't like the look of their brick. That's enough. It's their house. A mason telling you that your taste is wrong is a mason overstepping — my

job is to tell you the consequences, not to pick your colors.

There. That's the case for. It's not nothing. Now let's talk about what the paint actually does to the wall.

Chapter 3: The Honest Case Against — What Paint Does to Brick

Now the other side, and this is where my fifty years of repairing brick earns its keep. Everything in this chapter is physics and chemistry, not taste.

Paint traps moisture. This is the central fact. Brick is designed to breathe. It absorbs water — from rain, from humidity, from inside the house — and it releases that water back out as vapor. That's the moisture cycle the entire wall assembly is built around. Paint, especially standard exterior acrylic or latex paint, forms a film on the surface that slows or blocks that vapor from escaping. The water still gets in — through the back of the wall, through cracks, through the unpainted mortar joints that shrink away from the paint film — but now it can't get out the front. So it sits in the brick. And water sitting in brick does what water sitting in brick always does: in winter it freezes and expands, popping brick faces and blowing joints apart from the inside. Year-round it dissolves salts and carries them to the surface behind the paint, where they crystallize and push the paint off in sheets.

This is the failure pattern I see on painted brick over and over: the paint looks fine for five, eight, ten years. Then it starts peeling — not everywhere, but in patches, usually on the weather side or near the ground. The homeowner repaints the patches. A few years later more peeling, bigger patches. Eventually somebody calls me, and when I get the paint off I find spalled brick underneath — the faces damaged by years of trapped moisture cycling. The paint didn't just fail; it manufactured the brick damage hiding under it.

The breathable-paint caveat. The paint industry knows about this, and the honest manufacturers will tell you: if you're going to coat brick, use a breathable masonry coating — mineral-based paints, silicate paints, products specifically formulated to let vapor pass through. The Paint Quality Institute's guidance on masonry coatings says exactly this. A breathable coating is genuinely better than a standard exterior paint on brick. But "better" isn't "harmless" — even breathable coatings change the wall's moisture behavior, they still require maintenance, and they still commit you to the recoat cycle. And here's what I've observed in the field: most painted brick houses were not painted with specialty breathable mineral coatings. They were painted with

whatever the painter had on the truck.

It's permanent in practice. Paint soaks into brick's pores. You can strip it — we'll get to what that costs — but you will never get a painted brick wall back to looking like it was never painted. There's always ghosting, always residue in the pores, always a wall that looks "cleaned" rather than "original." When people say painting brick is permanent, this is what they mean: not that it's literally irreversible, but that the reversal never fully restores what was there.

The maintenance treadmill. Painted brick needs repainting roughly every ten years — eight to fifteen with excellent prep and the right product. Unpainted brick needs nothing for fifty. Let me put that in money terms: a \$7,000 paint job, repainted three times over thirty years, is \$21,000 plus inflation, plus the touch-ups and cleaning in between (painted brick shows dirt far more than bare brick, especially light colors). Bare brick over the same thirty years costs whatever it costs to wash it a few times. The "cheap facelift" is cheap once.

It hides problems. This one matters to me as a mason. Paint covers everything — including the early warning signs. The hairline crack that would have told you the wall was moving.

The efflorescence that would have told you water was getting in. The spalling brick face that would have told you the wall was in trouble. Paint doesn't fix any of these; it just makes them invisible until they're expensive. I've opened up painted walls to find structural issues that had been developing for a decade under a fresh-looking coat of paint.

Warranty and resale complications. Some brick and mortar manufacturers' guidance discourages coating, and painting can complicate warranty claims on newer masonry. On resale, painted brick is polarizing in a way bare brick isn't — some buyers love it, some buyers see a maintenance liability and a stripping bill. In historic districts, painting original brick can run afoul of preservation guidelines and actually hurt value.

That's the case against. It's heavier than the case for, and I'm not going to pretend otherwise — but the case for is real, and the next chapters are for the homeowner who's heard both sides and is still considering it.

Chapter 4: What Proper Prep Actually Requires

If you're going to paint brick despite Chapter 3 — and some of you will, for the good reasons in Chapter 2 — then the prep is everything. Most paint failures on brick aren't paint failures. They're prep failures. The paint didn't fail; the surface it was stuck to failed, or was never ready.

Here's what proper prep looks like, step by step, and why each step costs money:

Cleaning. The wall has to be clean — really clean, not "looks clean from the curb" clean. That means washing off all dirt, algae, mildew, and chalking, using the gentle methods from the cleaning book in this library. Any organic growth left under the paint will keep growing under the paint and push it off. Any chalky residue prevents adhesion. This is a full soft-wash of the house, done right.

Masonry repair first. Every failed joint gets repointed. Every spalled or damaged brick gets replaced. Every crack gets evaluated — is it cosmetic or structural? Paint over a moving crack and the paint cracks with it within a season. This is the

step that separates the \$3,500 paint job from the \$10,500 paint job: the cheap bid paints over the problems, the honest bid fixes them first. And it's the step you most want done, because it's your last chance to see the wall honestly before it disappears under a film.

Drying time. The wall must be dry — not surface-dry, but dry through the masonry. After washing, that means several days of dry weather, longer in humid conditions. Painting over damp brick traps that moisture on day one, and you've manufactured the exact failure Chapter 3 describes before the paint has even cured.

Primer. Masonry primer, always — and on very porous brick, sometimes two coats. The primer does three jobs: it seals the porous surface so the topcoat doesn't get sucked in unevenly, it gives the topcoat something to grip, and the good ones block the stains and salts that bleed out of masonry. Skipping primer on brick is the single most common reason paint peels early. Primer is not optional and it's not the place to save money.

The right topcoat. A coating formulated for masonry — breathable, flexible enough to move with the wall through temperature cycles, rated for exterior masonry exposure. Not

interior paint. Not the cheapest exterior paint. Not "paint and primer in one" as a substitute for actual primer on bare brick.

Application conditions. Masonry coating shouldn't go on in blazing direct sun (it skins over before it bonds), in high humidity (it can't cure), or when rain is coming (self-explanatory). In Texas, that means early morning starts, watching the forecast, and sometimes waiting for the right week. A painter who'll spray your whole house in a single 105-degree afternoon is not doing you any favors.

Here's the budget reality: on a tough job, prep — washing, masonry repair, masking, priming — can run 30 to 60 percent of the total project cost. When a bid seems high, ask what the prep line includes. When a bid seems low, ask what's been left out of the prep. The paint itself is the cheapest part of a paint job that lasts. The prep is what you're actually buying.

Chapter 5: What It Costs to Paint a Brick House in 2026

The national numbers for 2026: professional brick painting runs \$3,500 to \$10,500 for a typical house, averaging around \$7,000. Per square foot, you're looking at roughly \$1.50 to \$5.50 depending on the market, the prep required, and the product used.

What moves a job within that range:

Size and stories. A single-story ranch is the low end. A two-story with dormers, gables, and hard-to-reach elevations is the high end — scaffolding and lift time cost real money, and painted brick on a second story has to be sprayed or rolled from height, which slows everything down.

Condition of the brick. Sound brick with tight joints: wash, prime, paint. Brick that needs repointing, brick replacement, or crack repair first: add the masonry bill to the painting bill. On an older home that's never been repointed, the masonry prep alone can add thousands — which is why the honest painters want a mason's eyes on the wall before they bid.

Product. Standard exterior acrylic is the low end. Specialty breathable masonry coatings and mineral paints cost more per gallon and sometimes require specific application methods. Over a whole house, the product upgrade can add a thousand or more to the materials — and it's the upgrade most worth paying for on brick.

Detail work. Windows, trim, doors, shutters — the masking and cutting-in around all of it is labor-intensive. A brick house with a lot of openings costs more to paint than a big blank elevation, even at the same square footage.

DIY. You can paint your own brick house and save the labor — roughly half the project cost. But you can't DIY your way around the prep: you still need the wash, the masonry repair, the primer, the right product, and the right weather window. And the mistakes are expensive — a DIY paint job that peels in three years because the prep was skipped costs you the materials, the weekends, and then the professional job anyway. DIY suits small sections — a garden wall, a mailbox column — better than whole houses.

Getting bids. Get three, and make them itemized — wash, masonry repair, primer coats, topcoat product by name, number of coats. Ask each painter the same questions: What

product exactly, and is it formulated for masonry? How many primer coats on bare brick? What's the masonry repair scope — and who does it, you or a mason? What's the weather window — what conditions will you refuse to paint in? A painter who can't name the product, skips primer, or will spray in any weather is the cheap bid from Chapter 4's warning. The bid you want is the one where the prep lines are the longest part of the quote.

The number I want you to carry out of this chapter isn't the \$7,000 average. It's the thirty-year number from Chapter 3: paint it once, maintain it, repaint it every decade, and you've spent \$20,000-plus keeping that wall coated. That's the real price of the decision. It's not hidden — it's just rarely added up.

Chapter 6: The Alternatives — Limewash, Mineral Stain, and the Middle Ground

Not every coating is paint. If you want the look without the full commitment of an acrylic film, there are older and newer options that behave differently on brick — and the differences matter.

Limewash. This is the ancient one — crushed limestone, water, and mineral pigments, used on masonry for centuries. Limewash doesn't form a film; it bonds with the brick through a chemical reaction and remains breathable — moisture passes through it freely. That's the fundamental advantage over paint: the wall keeps breathing. It's also the look a lot of people actually want when they say "painted brick" — that soft, matte, slightly varied European finish. The trade-offs: it's less durable than modern paint (it weathers and needs refreshing sooner), the color palette is limited to earthy mineral tones, and professional application runs \$6 to \$15 per square foot — comparable to or more than painting, because it's skilled work. But from a mason's perspective, limewash is the coating I object to least. It respects the wall's

moisture cycle.

Mineral (silicate) paint. The modern engineered version of the same idea — potassium silicate-based coatings that chemically bond to masonry and stay vapor-permeable. More durable than limewash, wider color range, genuinely breathable. This is what I'd specify if a customer insisted on a coated brick wall and wanted the lowest-risk option. It costs more than conventional paint, and it demands proper prep just like everything else, but it's the coating that does the least violence to the wall's physics.

German smear (mortar wash). A thin application of mortar smeared over the brick face, partially covering it for a rustic Old-World look. It's masonry on masonry — breathable by nature, and it ages like masonry rather than peeling like paint. It changes the texture significantly, which is either the point or the problem depending on your taste.

Stain. Brick stain penetrates rather than filming — it colors the brick without forming a surface layer, so breathability is largely preserved. The color change is more subtle than paint, and it can't cover mismatched brick the way an opaque coating can. But for a homeowner who wants to tone down red brick without sealing it, stain is the lowest-intervention

option.

My ranking, as a mason, from least objectionable to most: leave it alone; stain; limewash; mineral paint; German smear (fine structurally, it's a taste question); conventional acrylic paint last. If the goal is a lighter, brighter wall with the wall's health intact, start at the top of that list and see how far down you need to go to get the look you want.

Chapter 7: What It Costs to Undo — Paint Removal

Sooner or later, somebody wants the brick back. Maybe the paint is failing and the wall underneath needs attention. Maybe the house sold to a buyer who loves brick. Maybe the homeowner just got tired of the maintenance treadmill. Whatever the reason, removing paint from brick is one of the most labor-intensive jobs in masonry restoration — and one of the most expensive per square foot.

The numbers: professional paint stripping on brick runs roughly \$8 to \$15 per square foot, depending on the method, the number of paint layers, and the brick's condition. For a whole house, that puts full paint removal well into five figures — often more than the original paint job cost, sometimes multiples of it. Let that sit for a moment: undoing the \$7,000 paint job can cost \$15,000 to \$30,000 or more. The one-way door has a toll, and the toll is higher going back.

Why so expensive? Because the work is slow and skilled. The methods, from gentlest to harshest:

Chemical strippers and poultices. Paste strippers (the peel-

away type) are applied thick, covered, left to work for hours or days, then peeled off with the softened paint. Effective, especially on multiple layers, but slow — and the chemical has to be matched to the paint type. This is the preservationist's preferred method for historic brick.

Soda blasting. Baking soda propelled at the wall — far gentler than sandblasting, which pits and destroys brick faces and should never be used on brick you intend to keep. Soda blasting is faster than chemicals but still requires a skilled operator; an aggressive hand will still damage the brick.

Steam and low-pressure heated water. Professional systems use heated water at controlled pressure to soften and lift paint. Effective on some coatings, gentler than blasting, but slow on thick multi-layer buildup.

What doesn't work: a pressure washer alone (it etches the brick and drives paint pigment deeper into the pores — the exact wrong approach, and the subject of the cleaning book in this library), sandblasting (destroys the brick face), and wishful thinking.

And here's the part that stings: even the best removal doesn't fully restore the wall. Paint penetrates brick's pores. After

stripping, there's ghosting — a shadow of the paint in the brick's texture — and the wall looks like a wall that had paint removed, not a wall that was never painted. On some brick, the stripping process itself alters the face. A good restoration gets you to "looks like clean old brick," not "looks like new brick."

There's also the lead question. Paint on older homes may contain lead, and lead paint removal triggers containment, protection, and disposal requirements that add significant cost. If your house was built before 1978 and the brick was painted decades ago, get the paint tested before anyone starts stripping. This isn't optional — it's federal law, and the fines for improper lead removal will dwarf the job cost.

Always test a patch first. Before committing to a full-house stripping, have the contractor strip a test section — a few square feet in an inconspicuous spot, all the way through every paint layer. The test patch tells you four things no estimate can: how many layers are actually there (homeowners always underestimate), which removal method actually works on your specific paint-and-brick combination, what the brick looks like underneath (ghosting, staining, damage the paint was hiding), and how long a square foot

really takes — which is what the final price is built on. A contractor who won't do a test patch is a contractor guessing at your expense. The test patch costs a few hundred dollars and has saved my customers from five-figure surprises more times than I can count. If the test reveals the brick underneath is badly damaged or the ghosting is severe, you may decide a fresh breathable coating is the smarter move than a full strip — and that's a legitimate decision, made with eyes open instead of a guess.

The takeaway: before you paint, price the removal. Not because you'll necessarily need it, but because knowing the exit cost is part of making an informed entrance. A \$7,000 decision with a \$20,000 exit fee deserves a longer think than a \$7,000 decision with no exit fee.

Chapter 8: The Texas Angle — Sun, Heat, and HOAs

Painted brick in Texas lives a harder life than painted brick in milder climates, and the Texas-specific factors deserve their own chapter.

Sun. Texas UV is brutal on coatings. A south- or west-facing painted wall in DFW takes a pounding that fades color and breaks down the paint film faster than the same paint in Ohio. Dark painted brick — the charcoal and black that's trendy right now — absorbs enormous heat; I've measured surface temperatures on dark walls that would blister a cheap paint and accelerate the failure of even good ones. If you're painting brick a dark color in Texas, the product quality matters more, not less — and the repaint cycle will be shorter than the brochure says.

Heat and thermal movement. A brick wall in Texas moves through a wider temperature range than in most of the country, and paint films have to stretch and recover with every cycle. Inflexible coatings crack; cracked coatings let water behind the film; water behind the film is the beginning

of the peeling cycle from Chapter 3. This is another reason the breathable, flexible masonry-specific products earn their premium here.

Storms and hail. A hailstorm that dents your gutters will chip painted brick, and every chip is a breach in the film — a starting point for peeling. Bare brick shrugs off hail that damages a painted wall's coating. After a big storm, a painted brick house needs a touch-up walk; a bare brick house needs nothing.

HOAs. Many Texas HOAs have opinions about painted brick — some require approval for the color change, some restrict it, a few in historic-leaning neighborhoods prohibit it. Check before you paint, not after. I've seen homeowners get the violation letter a month after a \$7,000 paint job, and the HOA doesn't care what the painter told you.

The freeze. February 2021 taught Texas a lesson about water inside masonry. Painted brick walls that had trapped moisture fared worse in that week than bare walls — the freeze found every bit of water the paint had been holding in. If your wall has any moisture-management issues at all — and most older walls do — paint multiplies the freeze risk. In North Texas, where we get a real freeze most winters, that's

not a theoretical concern.

None of this makes painting impossible in Texas. It makes the prep, the product, and the maintenance matter more here than the national averages suggest. Budget for the shorter end of the repaint cycle — eight years, not fifteen — and you'll be planning honestly.

Chapter 9: Three Walls I've Known

I want to show you this decision through three real situations I've encountered. I'm changing identifying details, but the walls and what happened to them are exactly as I found them.

The white farmhouse. A young couple bought a 1960s brick ranch and painted it white before they moved in — did it themselves over two weekends, one coat of exterior paint, no primer, no masonry repair. It looked fantastic in the listing photos when they sold six years later. The buyers called me two years after that because the paint was peeling in sheets on the north wall. When we stripped it, we found the original problem the paint had been covering: failing mortar joints across the whole elevation, now worse because six years of trapped moisture had accelerated the deterioration. The stripping and repointing together cost more than three times the original DIY paint job. The paint hadn't caused the bad mortar — but it had hidden it through one entire ownership, and the moisture it trapped made it worse.

The charcoal modern. A homeowner in an upscale

neighborhood paid top dollar — full prep, masonry repair first, breathable mineral coating, reputable contractor. Five years on, the wall looks excellent. This is the best-case scenario for painted brick, and it exists: when the prep is real, the product is right, and the homeowner budgets for maintenance, painted brick performs. I'll be honest — this wall is why I can't tell you painting never works. It works when it's done right. It just costs what it costs, and most painted walls I see were not done like this one.

The strip-back. A buyer purchased a house with brick that had been painted twice — original coat in the 90s, recoat in the 2010s. She wanted the brick back. The stripping took three weeks, chemical poultice method, and cost just under \$18,000 for the affected elevations. The brick underneath was sound but ghosted — you can still see the faintest shadow of paint in the pores if you look close. She's happy; the brick is healthy; but she describes the bill the way people describe a medical bill — necessary, eye-watering, and something she wishes the previous owner had thought about.

Three walls, three honest outcomes. The pattern: paint done cheap fails fast and expensively. Paint done right performs but costs real money to install and maintain. And undoing

anyone's paint costs more than the painting did. None of these outcomes was a surprise to anyone who understood the physics going in.

Chapter 10: The Questions Everybody Asks

"Should I paint my brick house?" Read Chapters 2 and 3, then Chapter 8 — that's my full answer. The short version: understand it's a permanent-ish decision with a maintenance cycle and a moisture cost, price the thirty-year number, and if the reasons still hold, do it right or don't do it.

"Will painting brick void my warranty?" On newer construction, possibly — check your builder's warranty and any masonry material warranties before coating. Manufacturers' guidance on coatings varies, and a denied warranty claim on a wall issue is an expensive surprise.

"Can I paint just part of the house — an accent wall, the chimney?" You can, and it's actually a reasonable compromise: less wall committed, lower maintenance burden, and you keep most of the brick breathing. The transitions need to be detailed properly — where paint stops and bare brick starts is a moisture-management detail, not just a tape line.

"What about painting the mortar but not the brick?" Some products are marketed for this, but in practice it's nearly

impossible to coat joints without getting the brick faces, and the moisture dynamics get complicated. I'd put this in the "sounds clever, rarely works out" category.

"How long does painted brick really last?" With proper prep and a quality masonry coating: eight to fifteen years before it needs recoating, with the Texas sun pushing toward the shorter end. With skipped prep or the wrong product: three to five years before peeling starts. The prep chapter isn't optional reading.

"My painter says primer isn't necessary with his paint." Get another painter. On bare brick, primer is never optional — the porosity is too high and too variable for any topcoat to bond evenly without it. "Paint and primer in one" is a fine product for repainting a previously painted wall; it is not a substitute for dedicated masonry primer on bare brick.

"Can I power wash painted brick?" Gently — and this is where the cleaning book in this library earns its keep. Painted brick needs washing more often than bare brick (it shows dirt), but aggressive pressure will blast the paint right off, especially at edges and chips. Soft wash only, low pressure, wide fan. If the paint is already failing, washing will reveal it — which is information, not damage.

"Is it true painted brick is bad for resale?" It's polarizing, not universally bad. In neighborhoods where painted brick is the trend, it can help. In neighborhoods of original-brick homes, or with buyers who know the maintenance story, it can hurt. Your realtor knows your street better than any national article does — ask them, and ask what the comps say.

"What if the brick is already painted and it's fine?" Then maintain it. Keep it clean, touch up chips promptly (every chip is a moisture entry point), and plan for the recoat on schedule rather than waiting for failure. A maintained painted wall is a performing wall. The problems come from deferred maintenance, same as everything else on a house.

Chapter 11: Living With Painted Brick — The Maintenance Manual

Maybe you bought the house already painted. Maybe you painted it before you read this book. Either way, you're here now, the wall is coated, and the question is how to keep it performing. Painted brick isn't a disaster — it's a responsibility. Here's the maintenance program.

Wash it every year or two. Painted brick shows dirt, algae, and mildew far more than bare brick, and organic growth left on the film will work its way under the edges. Soft wash only — low pressure, wide fan, the gentle method from the cleaning book. Never blast painted brick with high pressure; you'll strip the paint at every edge and chip, and then you're touching up instead of cleaning.

Touch up chips immediately. Every chip in the paint film is a moisture entry point — water gets behind the film at the chip and starts the peeling process outward from there. Keep a quart of the original paint (write the formula down; paint stores lose records), and hit chips as you find them. A ten-minute touch-up in spring prevents a peeling patch by fall.

Caulk the transitions. Where the painted brick meets trim, windows, doors, and the foundation, the sealant joints are part of the paint system. Failed caulk lets water behind the paint film at the edges — the most common starting point for peeling. Walk these joints once a year and recaulk what's failing.

Watch the bottom two feet. The base of the wall takes splashback from rain hitting the ground, sprinkler overspray, and rising damp. It's where paint fails first. Make sure grade slopes away from the house, keep sprinklers off the wall, and give the bottom courses an extra look every year.

Recoat on schedule, not on failure. Waiting until the paint is peeling everywhere means the recoat job includes scraping, extra prep, and sometimes masonry repair underneath. Recoating when the film is still mostly sound — at the eight-to-ten-year mark in Texas — is a wash, spot-prime, and topcoat job. It's half the cost of a rescue repaint.

Know the warning signs. Peeling in patches (not just chips) means the film is losing adhesion — check for moisture behind it before recoating. Bubbling means water vapor is pushing the film off from behind — find the water source first. Alligatoring (that cracked, reptile-skin pattern) means

the coating has aged out and lost flexibility — it's recoat time. Efflorescence pushing through the paint means water is moving through the wall in volume — that's a masonry investigation, not a paint problem.

Follow this program and a painted brick wall will serve you well for its full cycle. Neglect it and you'll meet me — or someone like me — sooner, with a bigger bill. The paint didn't doom the wall. Deferred maintenance did.

Chapter 12: Travis's Straight Answer

You've read both sides. Now here's what I'd do, plainly labeled as one mason's opinion after fifty years of looking at what paint does to brick.

If it were my house, I wouldn't paint the brick. I'd wash it, repoint what needs repointing, replace what's spalled, and let the brick be brick. A clean, sound brick wall is a hundred-year wall. A painted brick wall is a ten-year maintenance contract. I've spent my career on the repair side of that contract — peeling paint, spalled brick underneath, moisture damage that hid under a pretty surface for a decade — and I've never once taken paint OFF a wall and thought "this wall was better painted." I've thought the opposite hundreds of times.

But — and this is important — it's your house, not mine. If you've read the honest case for painting and the reasons still stand — the brick is genuinely mismatched or damaged, the look matters to you, you've priced the thirty-year cost and you're good with it — then do it right: fix the masonry first, use a breathable masonry coating, prep like the paint's life

depends on it (it does), and hire someone who understands that brick is not drywall. Or consider the middle ground — limewash or mineral stain — which gets you most of the look with far less of the risk.

What I won't do is tell you paint is harmless. It isn't. It changes how the wall handles moisture, it commits you to a maintenance cycle, and it hides the problems I'd rather you see early. Anybody who tells you otherwise is selling paint, not telling truth.

The brick on your house survived the kiln, the truck, the mason's trowel, and fifty Texas summers. It's the toughest, most honest material on the property. My advice, for what it's worth: trust it. Clean it, maintain it, and let it do what it was made to do — stand there, breathe, and outlast us all. Whatever you decide, decide it with both eyes open. That's all any honest contractor can ask of you.

If you need masonry work — [brick restoration](<https://championbrickrepair.com>), paint stripping, repointing, or just an honest assessment of what your wall needs — that's what my crew does. And the rest of the library, including the cleaning book and the tuckpointing book, is at the [free brick repair books](<https://metro-foundation-repair.web.app/free-books/>) page.

Read them before you decide. That's what they're for.

About the Author

Travis Nech has spent 50 years in Texas brick, masonry, and foundation work. He owns [Champion Brick Repair](<https://championbrickrepair.com>) — (817) 900-6324 — [Metro Foundation Repair](<https://metrofoundationrepair.com>) — (817) 670-4474 — and the [LintelLOCK](<https://lintlerepair.com>) lintel system — (469) 730-0650. All his books are free at [Travis Nech's Free Book Library](<https://metro-foundation-repair.web.app/free-books/>).