Coating Fabric with Liquid Latex

by randofo on February 15, 2007

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intro: Coating Fabric with Liquid Latex
This is an easy way to quickly make any fabric airtight. As such, you can use this technique to make a wide array of inflatable objects.

step 1: Go get stuff.

Materials:
- liquid latex (get Clear #10)
- fabric (canvas is ideal since it is strong, tightly woven and doesn't stretch)
- a bar of Dove soap or similar (bacon soap is tempting but not recommended)
- three plastic dishes (large enough to hold soap)
- baby powder

Tools:
- 1 cheap paintbrush
- paper towels

Image Notes
1. A gallon of liquid latex is $35 from Douglass and Sturgess
2. Baby Powder is $1.99
**step 2: Prepare the materials.**
Get your three bowls. Fill one bowl halfway with water and stick your brush into it. Fill the second bowl with a small amount of liquid latex. In the third bowl stick a bar of soap.

**Image Notes**
1. Horizontal stroke.

**step 3: Paint your first coat.**
Take the brush out of the water and rub it into the bar of soap. This is done to keep the latex from bonding to the brush's bristles, but remember not to leave too much soap on the brush. After rubbing the brush against the soap, rub the brush against the side of the bowl to get all the excess soapy water off the brush.

Now dip the bristles of the brush into the liquid latex about halfway. Rub off the extra latex on the side of the container so that it doesn't drip everywhere.

Quickly paint a thin horizontal layer of latex onto the canvas. By horizontal I mean that all brush strokes should be made horizontally across the surface of the canvas.

The first coat will take longer and use more latex than all subsequent coats.

**Image Notes**
1. Rubbing in the soap.
**step 4:** Paint the second coat.
After about twenty minutes the first coat should darken and be dry to the touch.

At this point you are going to want to lay down the second coat. This time make all your strokes vertically or, rather, in the opposite direction of your initial strokes.

After the second coat your fabric should be airtight.

**step 5:** Paint additional coats.
Even though your fabric is now airtight you are going to want to put on at least one more coat for additional strength.

Just make sure you paint on the latex in alternating patterns. For instance, since your last coat was painted vertically, this new coat will be painted horizontally.

I wouldn’t recommend putting on more than 5 coats of latex. After 5 coats I imagine that the fabric will start to get very weighted down.
1. After you put on a few coats of latex it starts to look yellowish, shiny and rubbery.

**step 6: Powder it up.**

Once your fabric is well-coated in latex you are going to want to keep the latex from sticking to itself. This is easily done.

Take your container of baby powder and generously shake the baby powder onto the surface of the latex. Rub the baby powder vigorously around over the surface until the latex is no longer sticky.

Now you are done.

1. Shake out some baby powder and rub it into the latex when you are done.

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Comments

16 comments  Add Comment

JesusFreke says:  Jul 22, 2008. 8:13 PM  REPLY
Woohoo. I got my latex in today. I'll be making a didgeridoo from latex coated denim, inflated to make a tube shape. Thanks for the inspiration! :)

randofo says:  Jul 29, 2008. 10:58 PM  REPLY
Cool! Can't wait to see it.

gabriahl says:  Feb 11, 2008. 10:40 AM  REPLY
Awesome. Seems to me this could be used for a number of applications. Since its air tight that means it should be water tight as well. Which means you could use it for thins like backpack, clothing seams, tents, skin on frame kayaks perhaps. Just some theories.

randofo says:  Feb 12, 2008. 1:28 PM  REPLY
I'm not sure how well latex holds up to water. I mean, you can make a water balloon without a problem, but I don't know how well a water balloon will keep over time. Latex tends to degrade over extended periods (which can be bad for a boat).

a grain of alt. says:  Nov 13, 2007. 6:31 AM  REPLY
Wonderfully comprehensive instructable, the sort that can be used to branch off into other projects. I love it. Thank you for the contribution to Instructables.

Joreth says:  Sep 12, 2007. 9:15 AM  REPLY
"Can you give an example of what I would use this for?"

For one example, I have a whole tutorial on how to make rewearable latex clothing on my website in my Costumes section (http://www.theinnbetween.net) and I will be giving a latex costuming workshop in Tampa, FL on October 6th at http://www.stonehill.org/necro.htm

skulkingghost says:  Jul 3, 2007. 6:52 PM  REPLY
Liquid Latex is usually pretty cheap for the amount you get. This is a great instructable, I plan on upload a few liquid latex ones of my own. Personally I use Liquid Latex Shop for my latex and find their prices to be the best. I would defiantly do the baby powder addition since it works best, and I usually moisturize before applying liquid latex as well

jollor says:  May 31, 2007. 9:26 PM  REPLY
Can you give an example of what I would use this for?

randofo says:  May 31, 2007. 10:57 PM  REPLY
...or really to make any inflatable object you want that needs to be a bit more structural than latex itself.

flywoodkb says:  May 7, 2007. 10:28 PM  REPLY
How much coverage do you think you'd get from a gallon?
randofo says:  
A lot. I out 3 coats on this:  
http://www.instructables.com/id/ESE9DZ7FXREY95WDAS/  
...and that only used up about half a gallon.

flywoodkb says:  
Wow, yeah that's a lot. That looks like a cool project too, I'm gonna check it out tonight.

rimar2000 says:  
Good instructable, thanks

CameronSS says:  
How much does the liquid latex cost?

randofo says:  
About $35 for the gallon if I remember correctly.

tchou says:  
The problem with baby powder is that you have to use it frequently if you don't want to have your latex sticky, and gluing to itself.  
You can use an alternative with silicone spray, the kind of things you use to protect plastic for your car. It is much more durable, and cheap.