



WHEN SHOULD I THROW IT AWAY? Whether to Keep or Discard Common Materials

If your next big project will be cleaning out your garage or basement, you'll probably be faced with lots of decisions – about whether to hang onto that half-full can of paint that you used on the bedroom walls, about whether those never-opened tubes of caulk you bought on sale two years ago are too old to use, about whether the glazing compound you opened this fall will be good when you finish the rest of your windows next spring.... In other words, you'll need to decide when your materials are too old to use anymore.

In part, your decision may depend on the storage conditions. Paint, for example, may be good if it was left over the winter in a heated basement, but not if it was stored in an unheated garage where the temperature fell below freezing. Other materials have a short "shelf life," even under the best of conditions. To help you decide whether to "keep or toss" those cans and containers, here's a general guide to how long common materials will last:

Paints, stains, and varnishes should be stored at temperatures above 32°. Under these conditions, opened cans of latex paint will last for 1 year, unopened cans for 2 years; oil-based paint will last 1 year, opened or unopened. Oil-based stain can be kept for 1 year if the cans have been opened, but unopened cans will last 2 - 3 yrs. Water-based stain will last 1 year, if opened, and 2 years, if unopened. Oil-based varnishes will be good for 1 year, opened or unopened.

Opened cans of **glazing compound** will last for 1 year, unopened cans for 2 years, if kept above freezing.

Use opened tubes of **caulk** within two months; unopened tubes can be kept for a year, if stored above freezing.

Don't keep **dry grout mix and mixes that contain cement** (concrete, mortar, vinyl concrete patch, etc.) more than six months, once opened. Return unopened packages that you don't use to where they were purchased.

Water putty, dry plaster mixes, and dry joint compound will be good for 1 year, if kept dry (no minimum temperature). **Pre-mixed joint compound** will also last a year, but must be kept above freezing.

Asphalt sealer and crack filler, if stored above freezing, will be good for a year (opened or unopened).

PVC primer and **Thompson's Water Seal™**, sealed tightly, can be kept indefinitely (no minimum temperature), as can **concrete bonding additive** if stored above freezing.