



**AMERICAN CLAY**<sup>®</sup>  
Naturally Beautiful Walls<sup>™</sup>  
U.S. PATENT 7485186

| *forté*

- Substrate preparation
- General preparation
- Priming
- Mixing your plaster
- Plaster application
- Compression techniques
- Cleanup
- Storage



***GENERAL APPLICATION TUTORIAL:***

*Revised July 2016*

***A guide to properly applying American Clay Original and Forté plaster***

## LET'S GET STARTED!

American Clay creates surfaces reminiscent of classic interiors throughout history. Bring the natural warmth and sunshine of Provence into your kitchen... take a bath surrounded by the tranquil and earthy feel of a Japanese spa...travel to a vibrant Tuscan Villa every time you enter your dining room. Whether you live along the California coast, in an urban London townhome, or on a sprawling Calgary ranch, the possibilities are endless with American Clay.

Are you ready to get started? American Clay Earth Plasters can be applied by just about anyone! Whether you are an experienced plasterer, a handy homeowner, or just an everyday DIYer, our systems make everything as simple as possible. The following pages will guide you through our process each step of the way and provide easy methods for turning your home into a natural beauty.



## TOOLS & MATERIALS

Gather all appropriate tools and materials needed to complete your project.

You will need the following:

- Appropriate safety equipment (safety goggles and dust mask)
- Drop cloths
- Painters tape
- Paintbrush
- Paint roller with covers (very short nap or smooth foam)
- Paint tray
- 5 gallon bucket
- Pump-style garden sprayer or standard spray bottle
- Plaster hawk
- Tile sponge
- Stainless steel trowel
- Lexan plastic trowel (*used with certain plaster finishes only; more on Page 25*)
- Spade handle 1/2" gear-driven low-speed mixing drill with plaster paddle

You will also need the following materials:

- American Clay plaster(s) of your choice
- American Clay color pigment(s) of your choice
- American Clay Primer Sand
- Approved paint primer\*
- Up & EZ! binder (*Original finishes only*)
- Setting-type joint compound\*

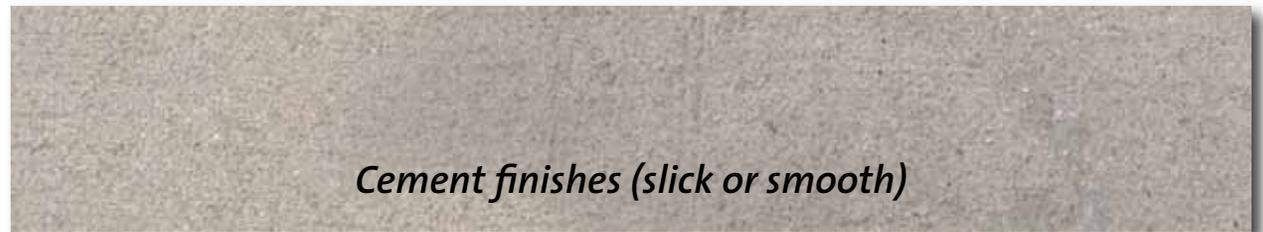
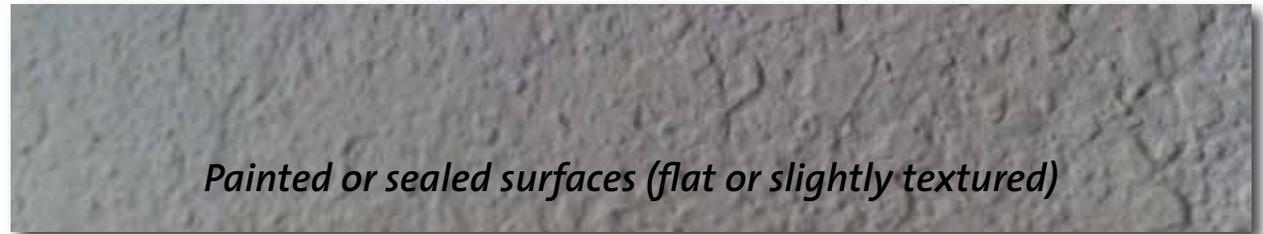
*\*List of paint primers and discussion of joint compounds on following pages*

## OVERVIEW

American Clay's application system has been developed so that a four step application process is all that is required to correctly apply our plasters to most surfaces:

1. Substrate and general preparation
2. Base coat application
3. Finish coat application
4. Compression

You will need to follow the General Preparation and Priming instructions for the following surfaces:



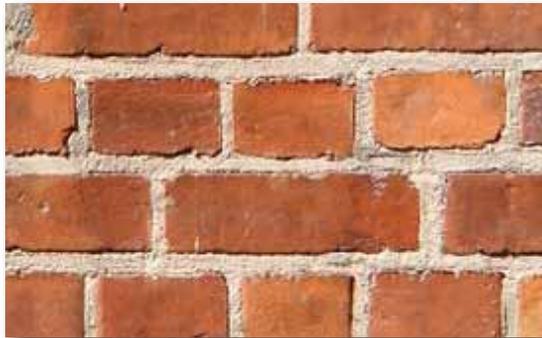
### **New wallboard and unsealed joint compound:**

These surfaces also use the General Preparation and Priming instructions, but prior to that, please see the specific recommendations for joint compound application and preparation on Page 6-7.



Other substrates listed below (and all others not listed) have different preparation requirements:

Please check the *American Clay Substrate Preparation* document located on our website for in-depth information on properly preparing your particular substrate. You may also call 1-866-404-1634 (toll-free technical support line) for further information.



**Brick (unsealed)**



**Concrete Block (unsealed)**



**Cement or Lime Stucco  
Brown Coats**



**Adobe**

Wallpaper, ceramic tile, foam, OSB, wood, plywood and paneling are examples of substrates over which plaster is not acceptable. These surfaces **must** be removed or covered using an appropriate substrate.

Please check the *American Clay Substrate Preparation* document located on our website for in-depth information on properly preparing your particular substrate. You may also call 1-866-404-1634 (toll-free technical support line) for further information.

## ***SUBSTRATE PREP***

The term “*substrate*” refers to the wall surface you will plaster over.

This is the step to ensure you have everything ready to go so your plaster will be able to be applied on the wall without any issues. A well prepared substrate is critical to ensuring a proper application of American Clay plasters.

Most problems associated with the application of our products are directly related to improperly prepared surfaces. Following the simple guidelines explained here are important to successful application.

## WALLBOARD PREP

Wallboard is commonly referred to as drywall, plasterboard, Sheetrock®, Gyprock®, gypsum board, blue board, green board, Fiberock® and Quietrock®.

Standard everyday drywall is acceptable. Specialty (mold and moisture resistant) drywall panels are not required, but are also acceptable.

Paperless drywall is treated the same as standard, paper-faced drywall.

Setting-type joint compound, also known as “hot mud”, is recommended for taping and bedding. **All purpose, pre-mixed joint compounds will require further preparation (please see notes below) and may require additional cure time, please check with manufacturers recommendations.**

Examples of setting-type joint compounds are:

- Durabond® 90
- Sheetrock® Easy Sand 45 Minute Setting-type Joint Compound

Setting-type joint compounds come in a dry powder form and are mixed with water upon application.



For all purpose bedding-type, non-setting, and unknown joint compounds, prime the entire surface with an approved multipurpose, transitional or stain-blocking paint primer (see list on Page 10) prior to proceeding with our Priming directions on following pages.

When pre-mixed (lightweight or all purpose), topping, and thinned compounds are used to achieve a Level 4 or Level 5 finish, the surface may require additional preparation to avoid peeling and delamination. A sealing primer, like Gardz®, DrawTite™ or Rx35®, would be used.

Wallboard seams must be taped and mudded with joint compound according to the recommended level for walls that will receive conventional texture treatments:

- Level 2 for all plaster applications except for Porcelina™ finishes
- Level 3 for Porcelina™ plaster applications

This is the minimum recommendation. If a higher level of quality is required, please proceed as needed.

The following are general guidelines to follow:

1. Screws and fasteners **DO NOT** require joint compound
2. Seams **DO** need tape and joint compound
3. Extra passes may be needed at corner bead or where additional leveling is necessary
4. **DO NOT** sand joint compound
5. High points **DO** need to be scraped off or knocked down with a putty knife or scraper
6. Use mesh tape with setting-type joint compound. If you use paper tape, be sure the work is well done and that no air is trapped behind the paper, as it will cause the plaster to delaminate when it dries.



## WALLBOARD PREP

*continued*

The surface must be dust-free prior to proceeding to priming.

Failure to remove dust can cause the plaster to delaminate as it dries. If dust has been produced anywhere in the house that may have coated the walls, remove dust with a vacuum or wash the wall with a tile sponge and let dry before proceeding.

## GENERAL PREP

Complete any necessary “General Prep” steps required to bring the substrate to a relatively flat, dust free, well-bonded surface.

- Maintain temperatures between 45 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit for three days before, during, and three days after application.
- Maintain humidity levels below 50% humidity during application to facilitate drying. For humid climates, dehumidifiers and fans can be used as a drying aid.

The following are general guidelines to follow:

1. Scrape off any loose or flaking paint or other surface material.
2. Clean and fill any depressions deeper than 1/16” for all plaster applications except Porcelina™ finishes. Clean and fill any depressions deeper than 1/32” for Porcelina™ plaster applications. Use a filler that bonds to the substrate.
3. Knock down high points higher than 1/16” for for all plaster applications except Porcelina™ finishes. Knock down high points higher than 1/32” for Porcelina™ plaster applications.
4. Lightly sand any high-gloss paint or glossy sealed surface with 150-grit sandpaper to provide a “tooth” for the primer.  
*\*Note: Please read warning on Page 9 regarding sanding, scraping and removing old paint.*
5. Remove any dust with a vacuum or clean with a tile sponge.
6. Wash sooty or greasy surfaces with a TSP (trisodium phosphate) substitute cleaner of your choice. Let dry completely.
7. Protect floors with drop cloths or plastic. Tape all adjacent surfaces. Keep tape 1/8” away from the surface being plastered, so tape does not pull off any plaster when tape is removed.



## Adhesion Test for Paint:

For both newly painted walls and walls with many layers of paint, it is good to check the paint adhesion. This simple test could save you labor by identifying potential substrate weakness early in the process.

Using a utility knife, make several light cuts in the paint three to five inches apart, then apply a strip of white masking tape perpendicular to the cuts. Press the tape firmly and then peel it off. The paint should remain firmly attached to the wall. If it does not, check with your local paint supplier for recommendations on making the surface sound. Testing on areas where seams exist is recommended.



## GENERAL PREP

*continued*

### **Warning:**

*If you scrape, sand, or remove old paint, you may release lead dust.*

*Lead is toxic. Exposure to lead dust can cause serious illness, such as brain damage, especially in children. Pregnant women should also avoid exposure. Wear a NIOSH-approved respirator to control lead exposure. Clean up carefully with a HEPA vacuum and a wet mop.*

*Before you start, find out how to protect yourself and your family by contacting the National Lead Information Hotline at:*

- 1-800-424-LEAD
- [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead)

## PRIMING

Priming may be required for application, depending on your substrate. All painted surfaces, new drywall, gypsum plasters, cement finishes, and other sealed surfaces require priming. Please see Page 4-5 for more information.

Other surfaces may or may not require priming. Please check the *American Clay Substrate Preparation* document located on our website for in-depth information on properly preparing your particular substrate. You may also call 1-866-404-1634 (toll-free technical support line) for further information.

The following is a list of primers that have been approved in our test applications. **You must use a primer from the list below.**



### Zero-VOC Primers:

- American Pride or Mythic® Multipurpose Primer
- Benjamin Moore® Natura® Interior Waterborne Paint (513) Eggshell Finish
- Kilz® Clean Start™
- Life Paint Company ENVIRO-LIFE® 100% Acrylic Stain Blocking Primer (EL-75)
- Mythic® PRIME Interior/Exterior All-Purpose Primer (MP730)
- Mythic® PRIME Interior/Exterior Premium Hide and Multi-Purpose Primer (MP720)
- Mythic® Tintable Accent Primer
- ROMA BioGrip Medium
  - *Diluted per manufacturers recommendations to a paint-like consistency*
  - *American Clay Primer Sand additive not required*
- Safecoat® Transitional Primer
- Sherwin-Williams® Harmony® Wall Primer
- Sherwin-Williams® ProMar® 200 Interior Latex Primer
- YOLO® Base Primer
- YOLO Colorhouse® Multi-Purpose Interior Primer



### Low-VOC Primers:

- Benjamin Moore® Fresh Start® Multi-Purpose Interior/Exterior Latex Primer
- BioShield® Healthy Living Paints
- Bondz® Maximum Adhesion Primer
- Sherwin-Williams® Multi-Purpose Water-Based Acrylic-Alkyd Primer

### Conventional Primers:

- Dunn Edwards® Ultra Grip™ Premium
- Kilz® 2
- Hamilton Coatings® Prep-Tex



## Mixing and applying sanded primer to the surface:

1. Stir your selected primer completely prior to mixing using a stir stick found at your local paint supplier. You may also use a small power drill with mixing attachment.
2. Add one package (1 lb.) of American Clay Primer Sand additive per gallon of primer.
3. If the container of primer is too full to add the complete package of sand, remove a small portion of primer initially and set aside for later use.
4. As you are mixing, scrape the bottom of the container so that all sand is integrated into the primer. The sand is critical – it enables the plaster to bond to the wall. Mix thoroughly.
5. Pour the sanded primer into a paint tray.
6. Using a paint roller (with a very short nap or smooth foam cover) move the roller slowly into the sanded primer, then roll it back and forth until it is evenly coated. Roll onto the tray's ridges to remove excess.
7. Working in about a two to four square foot section, roll the primer on the surface utilizing a "W" pattern. Begin by rolling upward to minimize drips. If drips occur, simply roll over them before they dry. Use a paint roller extension for hard to reach areas.
8. Every so often, remix the sanded primer to ensure the sand remains integrated, not allowing it to sink to the bottom of the container.
9. Continue until the entire surface is evenly coated.
10. Prime all outside corners, protruding areas and other vulnerable surfaces with two coats of sanded primer.
11. When using a paint brush, try to avoid using too much pressure when priming. This helps to keep the sand evenly coated on the wall.
12. Let primer dry completely prior to moving on to plaster application.



## PRIMING

*continued*

**Prime the entire surface with an approved paint primer mixed with American Clay Primer Sand additive.**

After mixing American Clay Primer Sand into an approved multipurpose, transitional or stain-blocking paint primer, this "sanded primer" is rolled onto your wall. This step helps create tooth that aids American Clay plasters in properly adhering to the surface.

- Please see list of approved paint primers on Page 10.

## MIXING THE PLASTER

Mixing the plaster is an important step in applying American Clay. Mixing to an appropriate thickness and with proper technique can save you a lot of time and physical exertion.

Mixing the plaster to a thicker consistency can result in unnecessary labor as spreading and controlling thickness of the plaster becomes much more difficult. Similarly, mixing the plaster with too much water can make it overly soupy, which will make it difficult to hold on to the hawk and will cause the plaster to be spread too thinly.

*A quick test to see if your mixture is just right is to run a trowel, your finger or a spatula down the center of the plaster in the bucket. If the plaster caves in on itself instantly, it may be too soupy. If the plaster doesn't move at all, it may be too thick. The aim is for something between these two consistencies, similar to a soft-serve ice cream.*

The technique required to mix all of our plasters is the same.

**Warning: Mixing plaster creates dust that can cause health concerns. Always use proper safety equipment when mixing plaster. A dust mask and eye protection are always recommended.**

1. Pour one gallon of water into a 5 gallon bucket.

*A 7 gallon bucket may be used as well for more comfortable mixing of all of our plasters, although, these are harder to find. Check with your local hardware store to see if a 7 gallon bucket is available for purchase. Some have even found 7 gallon buckets at pool supply stores and wine home brew stores.*

**\*Note: Enjarre™ plaster is packaged in a larger 63 lb. bag (our other plasters are packaged in bags weighing 50 lbs. each) and can be more difficult to mix in a standard 5 gallon bucket.**

2. Add 1/3 bag plaster and mix using a spade handle 1/2" gear-driven low-speed mixing drill and plaster paddle.
3. **If using an Original plaster only:** add the entire bag of Up & EZ! binder and mix completely.
4. Add enough water to dry pigment (if color is desired) to create a slurry and mix. Mixing the pigment into a slurry is optional, but this step helps prevent "starring".

**\*Note: "Starring" is when bits of pigment do not break up during the mixing process. When troweled, the bits of pigment leave dots or streaks of darker color in the plaster. Pre-mixing pigment with water helps minimize starring.**



**When mixing a standard Illumina Series Forté White color pigment pack into Forté White plaster:** Take a small amount (1/4 to 1/2 cup) of dry Forté White plaster from the bag and add it to your dry color pigment pack. Shake the blended pigment and plaster up in order to disperse the pigment more evenly. As the pigment packs are quite small, this helps to prevent color discrepancies from batch to batch.



5. Add pigment (wet or dry) to bucket and mix.
  6. Slowly add remaining plaster and more water to bring plaster to a soft-serve ice cream consistency. Total water content will vary between 2 to 2 1/2 gallons, possibly more, depending on humidity levels. (*Forté plasters will require more water than Original plasters to properly activate the pre-mixed binder.*)
  7. Scrape sides of bucket and continue mixing until all lumps disappear.
  8. Let plaster sit for at least one hour prior to application (the longer it sits, the better it becomes).
- ***Original plasters may be mixed up to 30 days prior to application.***
  - ***Forté plasters should be mixed and applied within 3 days.***



## MIXING THE PLASTER

*continued*

### Original finishes:

You must use Loma™ plaster for your base coat. If using Enjarre™ for a single coat plaster application, a base coat is not necessary.

Enjarre™ plaster is also suitable as a base coat. If your surface is highly textured (more than 1/16"), Enjarre™ will cover the surface more evenly and aid in making the finish coat application step easier.

### Forté finishes:

You must use Forté Base plaster for your base coat.

The following color packs are now recommended for use in the finish coat only: **Sugarloaf White, Estancia, Glacier and Treetop**. These particular pigments, when used in both coats, can lead to chalking problems which can lead to delamination.

If you wish to tint the base coat (optional):

- You may use 1/2 the color pack in the plaster when using Estancia, Glacier or Treetop.
- You may use Chalk Creek in the plaster when using Sugarloaf White. Chalk Creek is pre-packaged as an equivalent to 1/2 Sugarloaf White.
- When using Sugarloaf White as part of a color blend you may use Chalk Creek and either a full color pack or 1/2 color pack of the second color pigment in the blend in the plaster.

Example: If using Arcadia (1 Sugarloaf White + 1 Havasu) you may use:  
1 Chalk Creek + 1 Havasu OR 1 Chalk Creek + 1/2 Havasu

## ***PLASTER APPLICATION***

Applying our plasters at the correct thickness is important to achieving a proper and durable finish.

Applying the plaster too thick can lead to cracking and/or complete delamination from the surface. Applying the plaster too thin will leave the final finish brittle, causing it to be more prone to damage and making any repairs to the area difficult and more visible.

**Original finishes:** You must use Loma™ plaster for your base coat. If using Enjarre™ for a single coat plaster application, a base coat is not necessary.

**Forté finishes:** You must use Forté Base plaster for your base coat.

Using a hawk, trowel the material as evenly as possible. Apply plaster in vertical strips with irregular edges. Maintain a wet edge at all times and go from one edge of the wall to the other without breaking. Clean up all edges (around floors, ceilings, etc.) with a trowel to leave a finished edge.

### ***A helpful tip before you get started:***

When starting, load material onto your hawk, and then scrape it back into the bucket. This will “prime” the hawk to better hold material and reduce the likelihood that your plaster will slide off onto the floor.

Once the plaster hawk is primed, load it with a reasonable amount of material while holding the hawk in your non-dominant hand. This is the hand that will hold the hawk throughout the process.



There are several ways to remove material off the hawk. A skilled plaster applicator will remove material from the front edge of the pile of plaster, but this takes practice and is challenging. An alternative method is to hold the loaded hawk against the wall and push the material to the wall and spread it upward directly off the hawk.



While spreading the plaster on the wall, the trowel will slowly move from a larger angle away from the wall to a shallow angle. Repeat this process two or three times.



## ***PLASTER APPLICATION***

*continued*

Apply our plasters at the following thicknesses:

- **Loma™** as thin as one CREDIT CARD
- **Lomalina™** a bit thinner than one CREDIT CARD
- **Porcelina™** as thin as one BUSINESS CARD
- **Marittimo™** between one and two CREDIT CARDS thin
- **Enjarre™** as thin as two CREDIT CARDS
- **Forté Base** a bit thicker than one CREDIT CARD
- **Forté Finish** as thin as one CREDIT CARD
- **Forté White** a bit thinner than one CREDIT CARD

## PLASTER APPLICATION

*continued*

Applying our plasters at the correct thickness is important to achieving a proper and durable finish.

Applying the plaster too thick can lead to cracking and/or complete delamination from the surface. Applying the plaster too thin will leave the final finish brittle, causing it to be more prone to damage and making any repairs to the area difficult and more visible.

At this point you must spread the material to an even thickness by moving excess from one area to an area that does not have any plaster. Once again, the trowel will start at a steeper angle to move the excess material, and then once over the area without plaster slowly reduce the angle to deposit the plaster onto the surface.



As you collect material on your trowel you will occasionally need to remove this by pulling the trowel against the edge of the hawk. This material at the edge of the hawk can be pushed to the middle and gathered with the other material in the center ready for the next pass onto the wall. Continue the application process until the entire wall is evenly covered.



When working into an inside corner, it is important to start about an inch from the corner, spread toward the center of the wall and then take the trowel back into the corner.



**During application the visual appearance of the surface can provide clues to proper thickness. Each of our plasters is applied at different thicknesses, please see guides to proper thickness to the right.**

If the surface is applied too thin there will be chatter or lines (left) or sand drags (right). This can be remedied by applying additional material in these areas with a shallow trowel angle to the wall.



## ***PLASTER APPLICATION***

*continued*

Apply our plasters at the following thicknesses:

- **Loma™** as thin as one CREDIT CARD
- **Lomalina™** a bit thinner than one CREDIT CARD
- **Porcelina™** as thin as one BUSINESS CARD
- **Marittimo™** between one and two CREDIT CARDS thin
- **Enjarre™** as thin as two CREDIT CARDS
- **Forté Base** a bit thicker than one CREDIT CARD
- **Forté Finish** as thin as one CREDIT CARD
- **Forté White** a bit thinner than one CREDIT CARD

## PLASTER APPLICATION

*continued*

Applying our plasters at the correct thickness is important to achieving a proper and durable finish.

Applying the plaster too thick can lead to cracking and/or complete delamination from the surface. Applying the plaster too thin will leave the final finish brittle, causing it to be more prone to damage and making any repairs to the area difficult and more visible.

*Continued from Page 17.*

During application the visual appearance of the surface can provide clues to proper thickness. Each of our plasters is applied at different thicknesses, please see guides to proper thickness on Page 15, 17 or 19.

If the trowel is held at too large of an angle it will remove more plaster and maintain the thin coverage on the wall. If the plaster was left alone and not trowelled back across you will see a surface that has bubbles (left) or has a sloppy trowel edge (right). These need to be smoothed over and the excess plaster moved to new areas or removed back to the hawk.



Once you have achieved a reasonable surface (see image on Page 19) stop and move to the next wall. Your base coat does not need to be perfect. You will need to achieve a more even finish, if desired, on your finish coat.

***The less you trowel the material across the surface the better: over-working can cause problems!***

## PLASTER APPLICATION

*continued*

Apply our plasters at the following thicknesses:

- **Loma™** as thin as one CREDIT CARD
- **Lomalina™** a bit thinner than one CREDIT CARD
- **Porcelina™** as thin as one BUSINESS CARD
- **Marittimo™** between one and two CREDIT CARDS thin
- **Enjarre™** as thin as two CREDIT CARDS
- **Forté Base** a bit thicker than one CREDIT CARD
- **Forté Finish** as thin as one CREDIT CARD
- **Forté White** a bit thinner than one CREDIT CARD



**Let your plaster dry completely prior to applying the finish coat.**

Drying time will vary between a couple hours to one day depending on air circulation, temperature and humidity. The plaster will visually let you know when it has dried completely. The original dark, wet look of the plaster will obviously fade to a lighter shade.

## PLASTER APPLICATION

*continued*

Applying our plasters at the correct thickness is important to achieving a proper and durable finish.

Applying the plaster too thick can lead to cracking and/or complete delamination from the surface. Applying the plaster too thin will leave the final finish brittle, causing it to be more prone to damage and making any repairs to the area difficult and more visible.

**Original finishes:** You may use Loma™, Lomalina™, Marittimo™, or Porcelina™ plaster for your finish coat over a Loma™ base coat *OR* you may use Enjarre™ for a single coat plaster application over a properly prepared substrate.

**Forté finishes:** You may use Forté Base, Forté Finish, or Forté White for your finish coat over a Forté Base base coat.

1. Begin by lightly wetting the surface prior to applying the finish plaster over the base coat. Misting the wall lightly prior to applying the second coat will give you more working time because it slows the plaster's drying speed.



The key is to mist **lightly**: over-wetting will cause problems! There should not be drips or runs of water on your surface and the color should be splotchy and uneven. If your wall color is dark and uniform, you have probably over-wet some areas of the plaster.

**\*Note: Do not pre-wet the primed surface if using Enjarre™ in a single coat plaster application.**

2. Follow application steps on Page 14-18, under base coat application section, to apply the finish coat.
3. Your finish coat should be applied more evenly, if desired, than the base coat. See Page 21 for techniques to achieve different types of finishes.

You can adjust the texture of your surface after you have applied plaster to the wall. While the plaster is still wet, you may:

**Create an evenly rough surface** by rubbing the entire wall with a slightly damp tile sponge. This is perfect for a sand finish. This can be achieved by using varying circular-like strokes utilizing a slight amount of pressure. This will also help to remove unwanted trowel marks.



**Create an evenly smooth finish** by first completing the sponging steps described above. Next, you will want to trowel over the plaster. Use a light amount of pressure while keeping your trowel at a slight angle from the surface. The key is to trowel lightly because overworking the plaster will cause problems leading to cracking.

**If your plaster crazes** (spider checks) as it dries, re-troweling lightly while the plaster is *leather hard* (still damp, but no longer tacky) will reduce this. The final step of compression will remove any residual cracking.



Let your plaster dry completely prior to moving on to compression.

## PLASTER APPLICATION

*continued*

Apply our plasters at the following thicknesses:

- **Loma™** as thin as one CREDIT CARD
- **Lomalina™** a bit thinner than one CREDIT CARD
- **Porcelina™** as thin as one BUSINESS CARD
- **Marittimo™** between one and two CREDIT CARDS thin
- **Enjarre™** as thin as two CREDIT CARDS
- **Forté Base** a bit thicker than one CREDIT CARD
- **Forté Finish** as thin as one CREDIT CARD
- **Forté White** a bit thinner than one CREDIT CARD

## COMPRESSION

As our saying goes: “For your walls to impress, you must compress!”

Compression is the final and *most critical step* in our application process.

After the finish coat is completely dry, you *must* use one of the compression techniques described in this section. The compression step stabilizes the surface, prevents dusting, and helps to even out color variations in the plaster. This process also makes the finish surface repairable.

Your compression choice will also effect your plaster surface’s final look and feel, so be sure to select the appropriate technique for the plaster finish you wish to achieve.

### Sponge compression:

After the wall has completely dried, rub the surface with a tile sponge using varying circular-like strokes utilizing a slight amount of pressure. The tile sponge should be damp, not dripping with water. To remove excess water from the sponge, wring it out as best as possible.

If the wall gets too wet, the color will lighten (causing discoloration) as the sponge rubs the surface. Stop rubbing and allow the wall to dry for a short period of time. Wring out your sponge prior to continuing if the problem persists. Also, if the wall surface is too wet, you may begin to bring the larger aggregates of the plaster to the surface, creating a rougher, textured finish.

As you move across the wall, the tile sponge will become dry and will begin to accumulate pigment on the surface. Simply, dip your sponge into a bucket of water and wring it out before resuming compression.

Sponge compression can be completed on any of our plasters:

- If used on a smoother finish, the surface will become more matte.
- If used on a rougher finish, the surface will feel slightly rough. You will also need to brush any excess sand off the wall as you go with a brush or dry tile sponge.

Sponge compression, especially on a smoother surface, also tends to bring out the “sparkle” of the sand aggregates. The photo on the next page demonstrates this appearance.

**The final surface should be stable and not sandy or dusty when you finish.**

## COMPRESSION

*continued*

If you have questions about the compression process, or need a fuller explanation of how to do it effectively, please call 1-866-404-1634 (toll-free technical support line) for further information.

For a video demonstration and explanation of the compression process, visit:

- [www.americanclay.com](http://www.americanclay.com)
- Click “Online Workshop”
- Click “Step 5. Compression Techniques”



# COMPRESSION

*continued*

As our saying goes: “For your walls to impress, you must compress!”

Compression is the final and *most critical step* in our application process.

After the finish coat is completely dry, you *must* use one of the compression techniques described in this section. The compression step stabilizes the surface, prevents dusting, and helps to even out color variations in the plaster. This process also makes the finish surface repairable.

Your compression choice will also effect your plaster surface’s final look and feel, so be sure to select the appropriate technique for the plaster finish you wish to achieve.

## Hard troweled compression for a matte or smooth finish:

After the wall is dry, lightly mist the plaster so the surface is fully damp (no dry spots remain) but water is not running down the wall.

Using a stainless steel or Lexan plastic trowel\* (*see note on Page 25 for trowel selection*), trowel the surface using small, half-moon type motions. Your trowel should be at a slight angle off the surface, not completely flat. The trowel should glide across the plaster and no scratching sounds should be audible. If scratching from the trowel is heard, the wall is too dry, re-mist before continuing.

Mist and repeat as needed until you have completed compression on the entire wall. ***Working in a two foot by two foot section or smaller is recommended.*** The wall should feel smooth to the touch after troweling.

If you use too much water during compression, the plaster surface will begin to create a slurry of material. This is known as “raising the cream”. Let the cream absorb back into the wall, and continue troweling. If this is a issue, mist less, or use a finer mist, to prevent this problem in the future. A small amount of cream is normal and can easily be worked back into the wall.



If your wall is excessively wet your trowel may begin to feel sticky to the surface, sometimes enough to trap the trowel onto the plaster. This can cause the plaster to delaminate from the previous plaster coat or substrate underneath when removing the trowel from the wall. If you start to pull or remove material from the surface, stop immediately and let the surface dry completely before resuming compression.

If large amounts of cream or dust are left on the surface, the wall will be lighter in color and leave irregular coloration behind. This is difficult to remedy and may result in the need to re-compress your surface.

If you have small amounts of cream or dust on the surface after your wall completely dries, you can correct any discoloration by using a lightly damp clean microfiber cloth. Using varying circular-like strokes, lightly buff the surface to remove from the wall. Repeat as necessary.

Hard trowel compression can be completed on any of our plasters.

**The wall should feel smooth and stable, not sandy or dusty when you finish.**



## COMPRESSION

*continued*

If you have questions about the compression process, or need a fuller explanation of how to do it effectively, please call 1-866-404-1634 (toll-free technical support line) for further information.

For a video demonstration and explanation of the compression process, visit:

- [www.americanclay.com](http://www.americanclay.com)
- Click “Online Workshop”
- Click “Step 5. Compression Techniques”

\*Note: A Lexan plastic trowel is recommended for compression with Lomalina™, Porcelina™, Forté Finish, and Forté White finishes. When using a stainless steel trowel with these finishes, especially in lighter colors, metal burn marks from the trowel are left on the surface causing discoloration.

## CLEANUP

Compared to paint and other plaster products, cleanup of an American Clay project is simple.

For areas in which plaster has dropped on the floor or other surfaces, clean up can be completed with warm water.

When working with darker colors, especially reds, allow the plaster to dry first, then rub or scrape off as much plaster as possible. This will remove most of the pigment from the area. Then finish cleanup with a damp sponge.

If pigment stains any surface clean up can be achieved with white vinegar.

### Cleaning your plaster hawk, trowels, and other tools:

All cleanup can be achieved with warm water for plaster that is dry or wet. Carefully clean your trowels with a brush. Trowels can have edges as sharp as knives and can cause injury. If using a sponge to clean your tools, do so gently. The image on the bottom shows a sponge that has been sliced in half by the edge of a trowel. Sanded primer on surfaces and tools must be cleaned when still wet.



## Storing excess plaster:

Once your project is complete and/or you are ready to store remaining plaster, spread the plaster onto a sheet of plastic or cardboard. The thinner the plaster is, the faster it will dry out. Place the material into sunlight to expedite the process.

Once dry, break into small pieces and store in a plastic bag or container. Clearly label the space for which the plaster was used, the plaster type, color, and batch dates of the pigment(s) used. This information may come in handy if you need additional material in the future.



## STORING PLASTER

We recommend you save the original plaster materials used in your project for future use. This ensures that the color and finish of your walls will not change if you need to repair the surface at a later date.

After a job is over, excess plaster should be dried out on a sheet of plastic. This material may be re-hydrated with water for touch-ups and repairs in the future.

- *Original plasters may be kept wet as long as 30 days prior to use.*
- *Forté plasters should be mixed and applied within 3 days. For best results, do not keep wet longer than 3 days.*

Leaving wet plaster in a bucket for more than 6 months may lead to mold growth. Plaster with straw or mica in it may mold within two days to a week, so use it or dry it out promptly. Some pigments may oxidize and change color if left in a bucket wet for more than ten days.



# AMERICAN CLAY<sup>®</sup>

Naturally Beautiful Walls<sup>™</sup>  
U.S. PATENT 7485186

*forté*



*Please note: The guidelines outlined in these instructions are provided as a source for general application procedures. We are not responsible for the results of your project. The only way to ensure a proper application is with due diligence on your part. If you have questions or are unsure of anything, please call 1-866-404-1634 (toll-free technical support line) for further information.*

American Clay Enterprises, LLC  
2418 2nd Street SW  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

1-866-404-1634 (toll-free)  
info@americanclay.com  
www.americanclay.com

**Revised July 2016**