

How to Paint for Greenscreen

Rosco is the worldwide leader in manufacturing digital compositing products – we are your source for all things needed to make your blue or green screen.

Why should I use Rosco Blue or Green Screen paint? Can I match the colour at my local paint store?

Most mixing machines found at local paint/hardware stores cannot achieve the colour saturation needed for a good compositing screen. All Rosco Blue and Green Screen paints are manufactured using a single-source pigment. This means that instead of mixing together different coloured pigments to create the specific greens & blues needed – we use one pigment of green or blue to create the paint colour. This means less interference from other colours in the spectrum and a cleaner key.

All Rosco paints are also manufactured to have an Ultra-Flat finish; this means no gloss in the finish at all. Any kind of sheen/gloss in your green/blue screen will appear as white on camera and may spoil your key – so a flat finish is very important. Most “flat” finishes available from paint or hardware stores have a slight sheen to them.

How do I clean my painted Rosco Green/Blue Screen?

Unfortunately, there is no good way to clean a painted Rosco Green or Blue Screen. As with any paint, the attribute that makes a painted surface cleanable also adds a gloss/sheen. Because the flat-finish is so important to a blue or green screen, our paints do not result in a cleanable surface. Your best option is to re-paint.

When should I use Green vs Blue or vice-versa?

The answer to this depends on a few factors, but a good rule of thumb Film = Blue and Digital = Green. The blue layer of the film emulsion is more sensitive, so blue screen is more effective and the chips in most digital/HD cameras are more sensitive to green so green screen is more effective. However, you have to couple that rule of thumb with what you’re shooting in front of it. If your set or costumes have a lot of blue elements in them (like Cookie Monster or Superman’s suit) then green screen would be a better choice.

What is the difference between Chroma Key Blue/Green and Digital Blue/Green (like Rosco’s Digicomp or Ultimatte)? When should I use one vs. the other?

There are two kinds of compositing colours – Chroma Key and Digital. The main difference between the two is simply the purity of the colour. When we first released our Chroma Key product, it was designed for the analog Chroma Key Switchers that would take out the entire band of green or blue and replace it with an image – usually a weather map. Today’s digital compositing software can lock onto very specific colours and while it still makes sense to keep those colours one of the primary blue or green, by making the colour a ‘pure’ green or blue for the equipment makes the compositing easier for complicated keying. We achieve this ‘purity’ of colour for the camera by using specific fluorescent blue or green pigments to manufacture our digital range of colours.

Today, there are more people shooting green screen video than ever before. If you plan to paint a green screen, first ask yourself what kind of keying you plan on doing in post. If the edits will be relatively simple and the shots won't have high action or special effects in them – 90% of the green screen jobs can be accomplished with Chroma Key. Rosco's original product, Chroma Key paint, is not only still available – but Chroma Key Green continues to be our best seller. It is easy to apply and often times will cover in one coat.

However, if you believe your edits will be more complicated, then you might consider using our digital green or blue paints. These high-end paints are great for making it easier to key in post – but can be a challenge to apply onto your wall.

How do I properly apply Rosco Digital Paints?

Digital paints like Rosco's Ultimatte Green or Digicomp Green can be difficult to apply. This is because the fluorescent pigments used to achieve the pure colour are much larger than standard pigments. The larger pigments don't mesh together as easily and make it harder to achieve a smooth, opaque coat across the entire space. If at all possible, it is highly recommended to hire a professional painter who is used to working with these paints or similar, highly pigmented fluorescent paints to complete your Digital Green Screen. If that is not an option, here are some suggestions you can try:

1.) Prime the surface uniformly:

- a. Make sure all of the surfaces are primed the same. For instance, do not put one kind of primer on the floor and another kind of primer on the wall. We recommend using Rosco Tough Prime White, which is suitable for almost any substrate – including most cement floors and various wall surfaces.
- b. Some professional painters have found that tinting our Tough Prime White with the digital green paint will help achieve uniformity. Do Not buy tinted primer from your paint store or tint the primer with other green/blue tints.
- c. Some painters have found that a light grey primer works better than a white primer.
- d. Make sure the temperature in the space is moderate, not too cold and not too hot. Especially with cement floors – wait for them to warm up before applying the primer.

2.) Be conscious of Batch Numbers – especially on large jobs.

- a. If you are buying multiple gallons, or multiple 5-Gallon buckets, try to make sure that all of the paint has the same batch number.
- b. If you are unable to get all of the paint you need in one batch number, take all of the batches you've received and mix them together in a big bucket – effectively, making your own batch.

3.) Roller Technique – Avoid roller marks and apply paint uniformly:

- a. Use the lowest nap roller
- b. Apply using a large crosshatch technique - large overlapping 'W's'
- c. Keep the amount of paint on your roller consistent – don't overload it at the beginning and don't stretch the paint too far at the end.

- 4.) Spray Technique – Don't dilute and keep the spray head equidistant from the surface.
 - a. The large pigments found in Rosco Digital Paints will clog up your nozzles. Be careful not to water the paint down as it will make it more translucent. Use the largest nozzle available and be vigilant to clogging. A clogged nozzle means differing amounts of paint being applied.
 - b. As you swing your arm/sprayer, be aware of your arm swinging further away from the screen on the 'sides' than in the 'middle' of the swing. Keep your nozzle the same distance from the wall.
- 5.) Be prepared for multiple coats: Two or Three coats at least.
 - a. If at all possible, let each coat dry overnight.
- 6.) Test, Test, Test and Practice 1st – buy a test piece of the substrate(s) you plan on painting and some extra paint for practice. Prime and paint the surface using one of the techniques mentioned above to find the one that works best for you, your space and your screen surface. The extra money and time spent testing at the beginning will be worth it in the end.
- 7.) Once you complete your digital green/blue screen, you may find that it doesn't look perfect to the naked eye – especially under work lights. Don't panic; remember that the green screen will be out of focus behind the subject. Once you light your green screen properly and try to pull a key, you'll find that the camera doesn't see the imperfections you see with your eye under the overhead work lights and you are able to pull a key just fine.

If you have further questions about setting up your green screen, you can buy our Basic Blue Screen and Green Screen Photography DVD, hosted by visual effects master Pete Curran.

Rosco also manufactures other products that match our compositing paints: including vinyl flooring, fabric, gaffer's tape and rigging cable. For more information on all of our Blue & Green Screen products, please visit www.rosco.com.