

## GRAFFITI PREVENTION & CONTROL

You've probably seen graffiti somewhere in your community. It's the words, colours, and shapes drawn or scratched on buildings, overpasses, train cars, desks, and other surfaces. It's done without permission and it's against the law.



### DO "LEGAL WALLS" REALLY WORK?

Communities that have tried "legal walls", an area that permits graffiti, find them ineffective at preventing graffiti. Over a dozen cities in North America have all found them to be "a failure".

While well intentioned, legal walls send a mixed message and often cause more harm than good. They may appear to work at first, but after a period of time, the surrounding areas also become covered with graffiti. Data also shows no decrease in arrests for graffiti in cities where there are legal walls.

### HOW DO YOU REMOVE GRAFFITI?

There are several ways to remove graffiti. The best method for removal is determined by the amount of graffiti, its location, and the vandalized surface. The low-cost method is the paint-out, which is simply to paint over the graffiti. Many city graffiti abatement personnel use solvents or chemicals to remove graffiti. Pressure washing the surface is also used.

### TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT GRAFFITI

1. Get educated. Learn about graffiti, how it impacts your community, and who is responsible for graffiti prevention and clean up in your area.
2. Report Graffiti to the appropriate authorities.
3. Organize a paint-out. Gather supplies and community volunteers to remove graffiti in your neighbourhood.
4. Plan a paintbrush mural to cover a wall continuously plagued with graffiti.
5. Coordinate a graffiti awareness campaign at your school or in the community.
6. Make a presentation on graffiti prevention to your school, class, or neighbourhood group.
7. Adopt a spot in your school or community and make sure it stays clean and free of graffiti.
8. Plant trees or other greenery near a graffiti-plagued wall. This will help prevent access.
9. Ask your community to install lighting in areas that are dark and often hit with graffiti.
10. Volunteer to help keep your community clean.

### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO TELL IF MY CHILD IS INVOLVED WITH GRAFFITI?

People engaged in graffiti run the risk of significant legal and health problems (this is particularly true of graffiti writers who inhale spray paint or take unnecessary risks, such as climbing onto rooftops and structures for the purpose of exposing their work). In some cases, the parents of graffiti taggers and writers have had to pay thousands of dollars, on behalf of their children, in restitution damages.

### WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR?

The following are telltale signs of graffiti taggers and writers. Do your teens have:

- Black permanent markers or scribes (used for scratching graffiti into glass),
- Heavily tagged property, including furniture and rooms,
- Piece books (where graffiti ideas are sketched),
- A collection of "Krylon" spray cans and nozzles often kept in a backpack,
- Spray paint residue on fingers and clothes, particularly after regular dawn or dusk outings with friends,

An interest in graffiti magazines and videos.



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### WHAT IS GRAFFITI?

The term graffiti comes from the Greek word *graphein*, which means, "to write".

Graffiti today ranges from simple, one-colour monikers (like a nickname), called "tags", repeated on many surfaces to complex compositions of several colours.

### TAGGING vs. WRITING

Most graffiti is the work of "taggers" and "writers". Taggers engage in the most basic forms of graffiti, which generally involves a personal, stylized (difficult to read) signature. Taggers are generally motivated to get their signature (or tag), "up" as many times as possible. Tags within our Region, are seldom gang related.

Writers are generally responsible for the more artistic forms of graffiti. Graffiti writers often work in small groups called crews and have been known to take significant risks for the purpose of displaying their 'art' in highly visible spots. Writers can be competitive amongst themselves, which can result in the proliferation of graffiti.

Graffiti should never be confused as an issue of art; it is an issue of permission

### GRAFFITI PREVENTION

The best way to prevent graffiti is to never let it happen. This is best accomplished at the design stage by using textured surfaces or limiting the surfaces to write on.

Where the environment has been already built, graffiti is best prevented by ensuring proper maintenance and the strategic use of:

- Plant materials
- Murals, and
- Where circumstances dictate, protective coatings over walls.

For best results, ivies and plant species with thorns should be used. Avoid large plantings where they block sightlines around windows and doors, or create hidden spots next to walkways.

### EVERY TIME I PAINT OUT THE GRAFFITI, IT COMES BACK. WHY SHOULD I BOTHER CONTINUING TO PAINT OUT THE GRAFFITI?

The key is to break this cycle by painting it out immediately. If left, the graffiti vandals assume that their tags will stay up as long the next time, which is why they will return to the same site. When the vandals realize their graffiti will not stay up, they become discouraged from further tagging.

### IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I CAN DO TO FURTHER PREVENT GRAFFITI VANDALISM?

**Lighting:** Make sure that lighting is adequate around the property, especially at night.



### Exposed concrete retaining walls:

Consider growing vines or ivy to cover the wall

**Paint color:** Try darker colors.

Graffiti doesn't show up well against a dark background. When you paint your property, make sure you have leftover paint for touch-up.

### HOW IS A COMMUNITY REALLY "HURT" BY GRAFFITI?

Graffiti sends the signal that nobody cares, attracting other forms of crime and street delinquency to the neighbourhood.

Graffiti drains tax dollars. Funds that could be used for schools, roads, parks, and other community improvements, are used for graffiti clean up.

Graffiti decreases a resident's feeling of safety. Neighbourhoods with graffiti see a decrease in property values, loss of business growth and tourism, and reduced ridership on transit systems.

### WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT GRAFFITI?

The most effective way to prevent graffiti is to remove it promptly. While this may be difficult, studies show that removal within 24 to 48 hours results in nearly zero rate of reoccurrence.

Consistent enforcement for graffiti vandalism is also effective. Or, turn a graffiti-plagued wall into a mural. Paintbrush murals are almost never hit with graffiti.