

Prevent Graffiti: Get the Facts

www.graffitihurts.org

1. What is graffiti?

You've probably seen graffiti somewhere in your community. It's the words, colors, 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. The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program considers graffiti vandalism.

The term graffiti comes from the Greek word *graphein*, which means, "to write". Graffiti today ranges from simple, one-color monikers (like a nickname), called "tags", repeated on many surfaces to complex compositions of several colors.

2. 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 neighborhood.

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. Neighborhoods with graffiti see a decrease in property values, loss of business growth and tourism, and reduced ridership on transit systems.

3. 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 a nearly zero rate of reoccurrence.

Consistent enforcement of local ordinances with strict penalties for graffiti vandalism is also effective. In many communities citizens can report graffiti using a designated 800 number. Citizens can also "adopt-a-spot" and keep it graffiti free. Or, turn a graffiti-plagued wall into a mural. Paint-brush murals are almost never hit with graffiti.

4. 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 California, Illinois, and other states 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.

5. 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.

Communities Primed to Stay Graffiti Free

First Response Team in Burlington, VT

Launched in December 2001, First Response Team repaired graffiti vandalism in over 900 locations during 2004, racked up over 1,700 volunteer hours, painted seven murals in high-graffiti areas, and in a local survey found that 92% of respondents reported a decrease in graffiti in their neighborhood. With an operating budget of \$37,000, the program includes removal within 72 hours, weekly volunteer cleanups, volunteer training, youth service learning, adopt a block, mural and other restorative activities, and community service for prosecuted graffiti vandals.

Operation Brightside, Inc., Kansas City, KS

In 2003, to respond to an increase in graffiti, the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, KS, built a coalition of public and private organizations to assess the graffiti problem and design a solution. This Graffiti Task Force targeted ordinance changes, expanded public and youth education, and coordinated a new abatement effort. After one year, a total of 644 graffiti cleanup projects were completed, 96% of calls to the graffiti hotline have been resolved, and the new code enforcement process is providing victims with free assistance.

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 neighborhood.
4. Plan a paint-brush 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 neighborhood 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. Contact a local Keep America Beautiful affiliate (www.kab.org) and volunteer to help keep your community clean.

What's Graffiti Hurts®?

It's a non-profit, community-based graffiti prevention program. **Graffiti Hurts®** was developed through a partnership between Keep America Beautiful, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to litter prevention and clean communities, and The Sherwin-Williams Company, maker of Krylon® brand paint.

Graffiti Hurts® provides resources to help community leaders initiate graffiti prevention activities, and to educate youth and adults about the impact of graffiti vandalism on neighborhoods. To learn more, visit www.graffitihurts.org.



Produced by **Graffiti Hurts®** and Keep America Beautiful, Inc., 2006.