



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is graffiti?

Graffiti is 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 "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 cleanup.

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. Is all graffiti the same?

According to the National Council to Prevent Delinquency (NCPD), about 80% of graffiti is "tagger" graffiti". Another 5% are "pieces," or large visuals. Nationally, gang graffiti makes up about 10%. In some cities, however, the amount of gang graffiti may be higher.

Most non-gang graffiti consists of "tags," "throw-ups," and "pieces":

- a "tag" is the graffiti vandal's moniker applied quickly and repetitively.
- a "throw-up" is a more elaborate tag, usually done in two or more colors. Vandals often use balloon letters, which are filled in or left as outlines.
- "Pieces," short for "masterpieces," are large, detailed drawings. They are colorful, can include cartoon-like characters, and may take an hour or more to complete.

Gang graffiti is used to mark gang territory, list members, offer drugs or contraband for sale, or send warnings to rivals. It may include letters, symbols, or numbers known only by gangs and law enforcement.

Generic graffiti (or conventional graffiti) includes random markings, initials, declarations of love, social commentary, profanity, graduation events--"Class of 1997"--and other non-threatening messages. Generic graffiti has no particular style.

Ideological or hate graffiti is any racial, religious, or cultural slur.

4. What happens to a graffiti writer who is caught? Is it really illegal?

Laws, codes, and ordinances that deal with graffiti vandalism may vary from community to community, but graffiti is illegal. The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program considers graffiti vandalism.

Typically, graffiti falls under "institutional vandalism" or "criminal mischief." While a graffiti arrest may be considered a misdemeanor (a minor offense), more than one can add up to a felony.

Enforcement of graffiti laws may include any or all of the following:

- • Fines and restitution for graffiti markings.
- • Suspended motor vehicle privileges.
- • Arrest and imprisonment.
- • Graffiti misdemeanors being stacked to allow for a felony conviction.
- • Parents or guardians fined or ordered to restore property to its original condition or provide restitution.

In California, for example, a 2008 state law makes it mandatory for a court to order a convicted graffiti vandal to cleanup or repair the vandalized property—and keep it graffiti-free for up to a year. And Los Angeles enacted an ordinance allowing the county to recover costs of graffiti removal from parents of minors convicted of tagging property. In Phoenix, AZ, a 2008 law enables the court to require the parent or guardian of a juvenile convicted of committing graffiti to assist the juvenile in community service projects if the parent 'provided the juvenile with the means to commit criminal damages.'

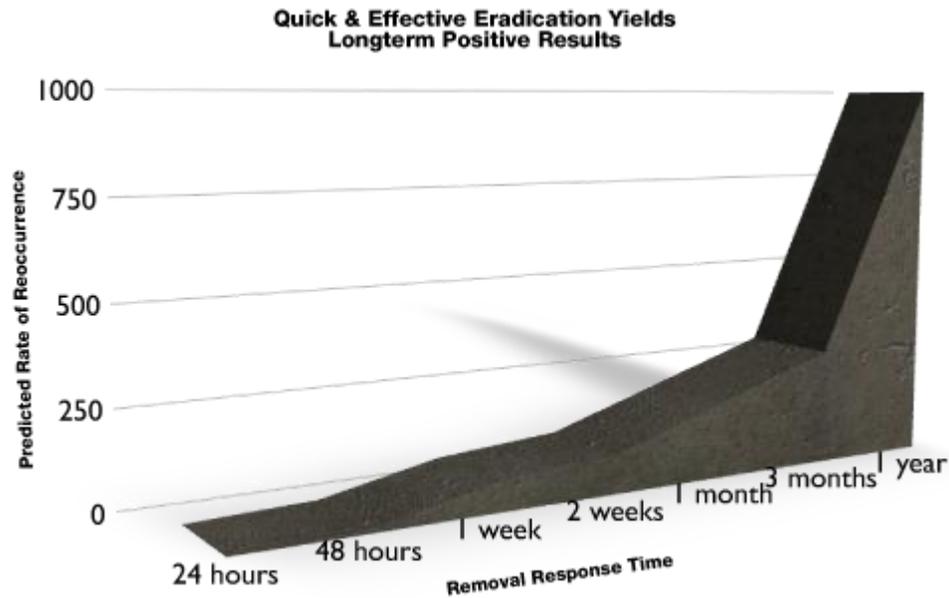
5. What is the best way to prevent graffiti?

Graffiti Hurts® advocates a three-pronged approach to graffiti prevention.

First, educate citizens about graffiti vandalism and empower them to take action. This includes targeted prevention strategies for businesses, homeowners, and other residents. And provide a way for citizens to report graffiti vandalism.

Second, remove graffiti promptly. While this may be difficult, studies show that removal within 24 to 48 hours results in a nearly zero rate of reoccurrence. Once graffiti is cleaned up, work to change the environment so that it does not occur again in that location. Simple Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies, such as changing lighting, landscape, and access to property are effective prevention tools.

Finally, ensure consistent enforcement of local ordinances with strict penalties for graffiti vandalism. Work with local law enforcement to ensure anti-graffiti laws are enforced, and that there is follow through in the court system.



6. Do legal walls really work?

Communities that have tried "legal" or "free walls," or areas that permit graffiti, typically find them ineffective, including over a dozen cities in California, Illinois, Connecticut, and other states.

While well intentioned, legal walls often cause more harm than good, and tend to attract graffiti vandals from outside the city. They may appear to work at first, but after a period of time, the surrounding areas also become covered with graffiti.

With a legal wall, governments or businesses essentially sponsor graffiti in an effort to rid a community of graffiti. This sends a mixed message. Data also shows no decrease in arrests for graffiti in cities where there are legal walls.

Communities that want to create a "legal" wall should be ready to take responsibility for any number of adverse effects, or liability and negligence issues. Following are just a few to consider:

- Who will monitor the wall?
- Will it be repainted regularly to provide a fresh "canvas"?
- What if someone writes obscenities on the wall? What action would be taken?
- What if the graffiti moves to walls nearby or surrounding the "legal wall"? Who will pay for removal? Who will ensure the safety of those removing graffiti?
- Who is allowed to use the "legal wall"? Will they be required to wear face masks? How will any "rules" be enforced?
- Are there laws in place that restrict possession of graffiti implement by minors? Who will enforce these?
- If you have any new data or information on legal walls, please e-mail [Graffiti Hurts®](mailto:GraffitiHurts@graffitihurts.com).

7. 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 a paint-out, which is simply to paint over the graffiti. Many city graffiti abatement personnel use solvents or chemicals to remove graffiti, and adopt-a-spot program will often provide a solvent in "cleanup kits" for small jobs. Power washing with water or other media is also used.

8. What is "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 nonprofit 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 remove graffiti, initiate graffiti prevention activities, and educate youth and adults about the impact of graffiti vandalism on neighborhoods.

9. What can I do to help prevent graffiti?

There are lots of things you can do! Consider organizing a paint-out or a paintbrush mural to cover a wall plagued with graffiti; adopt a wall in your school or community and make sure it stays clean and free of graffiti; report graffiti to the appropriate authorities; and lots more.

Disclaimer: The city of Nampa in no way suggests or promotes any products listed within or takes liability for any recommendations or damage that may result from the methods contained in this document.