

Level of finishing	Final appearance	Typical uses in residential construction	How to achieve
Level 1	Tool marks and ridges acceptable	Attics or similar storage areas not typically open to public view	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed tape in mud • Apply one coat of mud over fasteners (optional) • Remove excess mud from surface
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool marks and ridges okay • Thin coat of mud covers tape, one coat of mud over fastener heads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas where water-resistant drywall is used as a substrate for tile • Garages or other similar areas where surface appearance is not of primary importance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed tape in mud, and immediately wipe to leave a thin coating over tape • Apply one coat of mud over fasteners • Remove excess mud from surface
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No marks or ridges • Ready for priming and textured finish 	Ceilings, basements, or similar areas that will receive heavy texture finishes before final painting, or where heavy duty wall coverings are to be applied as the final decoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed tape in mud, and immediately wipe to leave a thin coating over tape; apply a second, separate coat of mud over joints and interior corners • Apply two separate coats of mud over fasteners • Fill and smooth all joints and prime before painting/texturing
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No marks or ridges • Ready for priming, followed by wall coverings, flat paints, or light textures 	All interior walls and ceilings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed tape in mud, and immediately wipe to leave a thin coating over tape; apply two additional, separate coats of mud over joints and interior corners • Apply three separate coats of mud over fasteners • Fill and smooth all joints and prime before painting/texturing
Level 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No marks or ridges • Entire surface covered with skim coat of compound • Ready for priming before decorating with gloss, semigloss, or enamel, or flat joints over an untextured surface 	High-end finishes, typically offered as an upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed tape in mud and immediately wipe to leave a thin coating over tape; apply two additional, separate coats of mud over joints and interior corners • Apply three separate coats of mud over fasteners • Skim coat entire surface and prime before painting/texturing