

Do It Yourself

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Wallpaper Basics

From "[DIY Home Repair & Remodeling](#)" episode DIR-116 -- [More Projects »](#)

Hanging wallpaper isn't as difficult as you might imagine--but it does require time and patience.

Before you begin a wallpapering project, remove as much furniture from the room as possible, and cover the floor with a drop cloth. Clear the walls of pictures, nails and outlet covers. Turn off the power to any outlets or switches in the room.

Blemishes will show up more clearly through wallpaper than through paint. To check for blemishes, direct the beam of a flashlight along the wall. Blemishes such as paint spatters will stand out clearly (**figure A**). Smooth such blemishes with sandpaper. Feel the wall for depressions, and fill them in with drywall compound.

Paint the top corners of the wall with ceiling paint (**figure B**). This will eliminate stark differences between the underlying wall and the wallpaper.

Prime the walls with a high-quality oil-based primer. Primer is especially necessary for new walls because untreated drywall will quickly absorb moisture from the wallpaper adhesive.

Apply sizing to the walls so that the wallpaper will be easier to install or, if necessary, remove.

Tips:

- Most wall coverings contain vinyl. Vinyl-coated paper is available in the widest variety of patterns and is useful in sitting areas and living rooms. Paper-backed vinyl is more durable and should be used in kitchens and bathrooms. Fabric-backed vinyl is very durable and is typically used in commercial settings.
- Buy more wallpaper than you need so you'll have enough to patch



Figure A



Figure B



Figure C



Figure D

tears and holes.

- Prepasted wallpaper is easier to work with than wallpaper that must be pasted separately.

Materials:

Drop cloth
Pliers
Flashlight
Paintbrush
Ceiling paint
Sandpaper
Drywall compound or spackling compound
Putty knife
Two sawhorses
One 4' x 8' sheet of 3/4" plywood
Sharp utility knife with extra blades
Disposable utility knife with breakaway blades
Measuring tape
Level or chalk line
Wallpaper tray
Broad knife
Wallpaper brush
Seam roller

To make your job as easy as possible, set up a large worktable in a different room from the one you're papering. A sheet of 3/4" plywood placed over sawhorses works well. The table allows you to spread out the wallpaper and cut it to the appropriate size.

1. Examine the design of the wallpaper, and determine where you want the pattern to meet the ceiling.
2. Measure out a length of wallpaper approximately 6" longer than the wall. Make a small mark just above the point where you want the wallpaper to reach the ceiling or crown molding.
3. Use the first sheet as a template for cutting the next one.
4. Roll the second sheet back up with the pasted side out, and soak it in a wallpaper water tray for about 15 seconds.
5. Slowly pull the wallpaper out of the tray, making sure the water has covered the paper, and lay the paper pattern side down on the table.



Figure E



Figure F



Figure G



Figure H



Figure I

6. Book the ends of the wallpaper by folding both ends toward the middle, paste side in (**figure C**). Booking activates the paste and allows you to carry the wallpaper more easily. To save time, book several pieces of wallpaper, and place them in a plastic bag to keep in the room you're papering.
7. From the least conspicuous corner of the room, mark the wall at a point that is 1/4" less than the width of the wallpaper. Draw a plumb line down the length of the wall from the mark.
8. Unbook the wallpaper, and press the top portion to the edge of the ceiling. Make sure your pattern is lined up properly with the ceiling and that the edge of the paper is flush with the plumb line (**figure D**). Don't move the wallpaper around any more than necessary. You might stretch it and cause the seam and pattern to be out of alignment.
9. The wallpaper may tend to wrinkle near the top corner. If this happens, cut a slit in the paper, starting at the edge of the ceiling and cutting outward. Use a sharp utility knife or a pair of scissors.
10. Use a broad knife or a wallpaper brush to smooth out the wallpaper and press it into corners (**figure E**). Start at the top of the wallpaper, and work your way down, using vertical strokes whenever possible: horizontal strokes can stretch the paper. Work from the inside area toward the edges to remove wrinkles and bubbles.
11. Trim off the wallpaper at the top and bottom. You'll need a wide straightedge to press the paper as tightly into the corner as possible (**figure F**). Use a sharp utility knife on the underside of the straightedge to trim the paper (**figure G**).
12. Hang the second piece, starting at the top. Line up the seams as closely as possible, and try to match the patterns exactly.
13. When your wallpaper has been up for about 15 minutes, use a seam roller to press the seams together (**figure H**). Don't press too hard: you might squeeze the a

RESOURCES:

Wallpaper

~~Seabrook Wallcoverings Inc.~~

~~Memphis, TN 38122~~

~~Phone: 901-320-3500~~

~~Fax: 901-320-3675~~

~~Website: www.seabrookwallcoverings.com~~

Wallpaper tools

~~Custom Building Products~~

~~Seal Beach, CA 90740-9948~~

~~Phone: 562-598-8808~~

~~Fax: 800-200-7765~~

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