HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

WALLPAPER INSTALLATION

Wallpaper is a home decorating option which can be installed by people of all skill levels. The success of your wallpapering job, though, will depend on understanding the process, taking your time, and exercising patience.

MEASURING THE ROOM

First, measure the room you'll be wallpapering. Multiply the height of each wall by its width, and then add together the figures for all the walls to find the total square footage of the room. For example, for a 9 ft. x 12 ft. room with 8 ft. high ceilings:

WALL	HEIGHT X WIDTH	AREA
Wall 1	8' x 9'	72 sq. ft.
Wall 2	8' x 12'	96 sq. ft.
Wall 3	8' x 9'	72 sq. ft.
Wall 4	8' x 12'	96 sq. ft.
TOTAL		**336 sq. ft.**

Some wallpaper guides recommend that you subtract from this total any space you won't be papering, such as doors or windows. However, unless most of a wall is made up of windows, where very little paper will be used, it's probably wiser not to subtract those areas, but instead to have a little extra for mistakes or problems.

With your square footage figured, you can shop for wallpaper. The number of rolls you'll need will depend on the type and style of paper you choose. The salesperson can help you determine how much to order.

SELECTING WALLPAPER

Just as there are numerous flavors of ice cream, there are many types of wallpaper. How do you select the right type for your home and for the skill level of the person installing it?

CONSIDER	GUIDELINES
Skill level	If you're just learning and don't yet have much experience hanging wallpaper, you'll want to select a type of paper that's easier to install. Lightweight vinyl papers (Sanitas™ is one brand) are about the easiest type to start with. Avoid flocked paper, foils, or mylars until you have some experience. Paper wallpaper, grasscloth, or heavier-weight vinyls are also a little tricky to handle when you are first learning.
Pasted or pre-pasted	Another choice is between paper you have to paste or pre-pasted paper. Both go on the wall about the same way, but pasting usually is messier and requires a couple of additional steps. So, you may want to choose a pre-pasted paper, especially when first getting started.

CONSIDER	GUIDELINES
Pattern	Select the pattern of your paper carefully. Basing the pattern you choose on the condition of the wall it is to cover will make installation – and the results of that installation – much more satisfying. Just about any kind of paper will work on walls that are perfectly smooth and straight, but few houses – especially older homes – have smooth or straight walls. On rough and irregular walls, medium size random patterns will tend to conceal wall imperfections. Also, papers that are physically thicker will conceal more effectively.

If you keep these guidelines in mind when selecting your wallpaper, you will make your work that much easier and your finished project more attractive.

PREPARING THE WALLS

Once you have your paper, you're ready to get started. Preparation of the walls is very important for good wallpaper installation.

1. Remove all switch plates, outlet covers, and nails.
2. Patch and sand all cracks or holes.
3. Paint the walls with **sizing** (a clear product that will allow for better adhesion of the wallpaper now and easier removal later). The sizing will dry in about half an hour.
4. If you are going to repaint ceilings and/or woodwork, do so before you put up the wallpaper.

TOOLS YOU'LL NEED

Before starting to hang your paper, get together the tools you'll need:

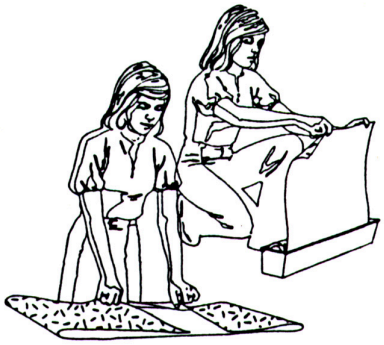
TOOL	NOTES
Tarp	To protect the floor
Razor blade knife and single-edge razor blades	A large supply of new blades (a 9' x 12' room can easily take 20 or more razor blades)
Smoothing brush, straight edge, 2' or 4' level, seam roller, sponge	For every job
Water tray	If you are using pre-pasted paper
Paste brush, or short-napped roller and roller pan	If, on the other hand, you'll be pasting the paper yourself
Stepladder and table	You'll also need a stepladder, and a table to work on will be helpful.

INSTALLING THE WALLPAPER

Paper hanging starts in the least noticeable corner of the room. Your last piece of paper will meet your first one here, and you can't always control the match. The corner behind the entry door to the room is often a good starting place.

CUTTING AND BOOKING

Cut your first piece about six inches longer than the height of the wall. Allow enough paper that you can place a full row or pattern element just below the ceiling line, so the pattern is not cut in half.



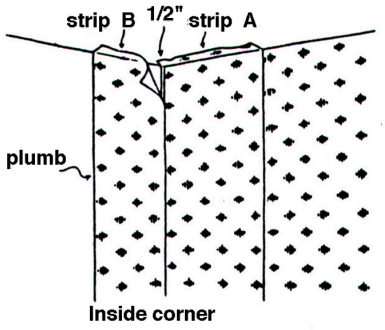
Soaking and booking pre-pasted paper

Then, if the paper is pre-pasted, follow the directions that come with it. The directions will tell you whether to use cold or warm water in the water tray and how long the paper needs to soak in the tray. They will also tell you the length of time the paper should be "**booked.**" (To book the paper, remove it from the water tray and gently fold it, paste side to paste side, without creasing it. This allows the paper to expand and adjust to the reconstituted glue and achieve its final dimensions.) Booking time can range from 30 seconds to 5 minutes, depending on the paper and glue.

If you are applying paste, brush or roll it on to a thin, even consistency. *(Different types or weights of paper require different glues. Be sure to get the right type when you buy your paper.)* Directions on the paste may advise booking the paper; if so, follow those instructions.

HANGING THE FIRST PIECE

Now you are ready to hang your first piece. Put it up in the corner, allowing about a 3" overlap on the ceiling and 3" over the baseboard. About 1/2" of the paper should extend around the corner onto the adjoining wall, so that when you're completing the room, your last piece will go on top of this small overlap of the starting strip. If the corner is not plumb or square, any defects will be covered by the paper. (Paper all your inside corners this way.)



Papering an inside corner

> **GET THE FIRST PIECE PLUMB**
>
> Check with your level to make sure the edge of this strip is perfectly plumb. It's very important to get this first piece hanging plumb, because it will affect all the rest.

With your smoothing brush, gently work out any wrinkles in the paper, being careful not to crease it. You can usually lift off the top or bottom half of the strip several times, if necessary, to get out wrinkles – the paste will still work. After the paper is straight and the wrinkles are out, use the brush to remove any remaining air bubbles and ensure a good bond between the paper and the wall. Work from side to side in sweeping arcs across the entire sheet.

MATCHING THE NEXT PIECE

Your next piece will butt up against your first piece. If you've chosen a pattern with a match, the two adjacent strips must line up correctly to form the pattern printed on the paper. Be sure to cut each piece long enough to allow the paper to match and still have several inches to extend over at the ceiling and the baseboard. With some matches you may have a foot or more scrap at either end. Don't worry – this is normal.

When you put this second piece on the wall, you can gently slide it some – but don't stretch it too much. Paper is somewhat elastic when wet, but, as it dries, it will shrink up and show a gap between pieces if it has been stretched to “fit.” You'll also need to watch for stretching of the paper from its own weight as it hangs wet, as such stretching can cause the pattern to be misaligned. If you have this kind of mismatch, start your piece a bit high at the ceiling; the match will be aligned where it is most noticeable, at eye level, though it may be off again at the floor.

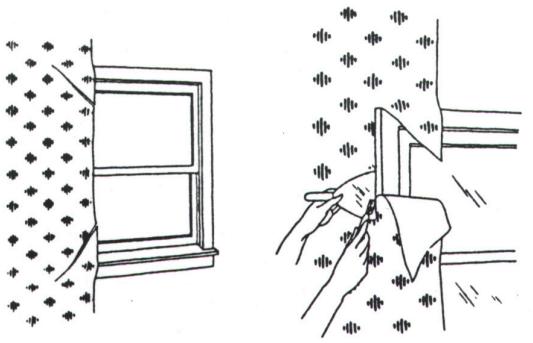
ROLLING SEAMS AND TRIMMING

After the second strip is up for a few minutes, use a seam roller to roll over the seams. Then, trim the excess paper at top and bottom, using a wallpaper straight edge held against the ceiling or baseboard. Cut between this guide and the wall with a single-edge razor blade, held either by itself or in a holder.

> **CHANGE BLADES OFTEN**
>
> Since you only cut with the corner of the blade, it will dull quickly. If you don't change blades frequently, the dull edge will tear and rip the paper, instead of cutting. Using a dull blade is one of the most common mistakes made by beginners.

DOORS AND WINDOWS

To install wallpaper around a door or window, apply a full piece as described previously, lightly pressing the strip over the opening to be trimmed. Then, make a diagonal cut from the corner into the center of the opening. Being careful not to tear the paper, gently fit it around the frame until it sits flat against the wall. After smoothing any wrinkles out, trim the paper around the molding, using a straight edge as described earlier.



Fitting and trimming paper around a window

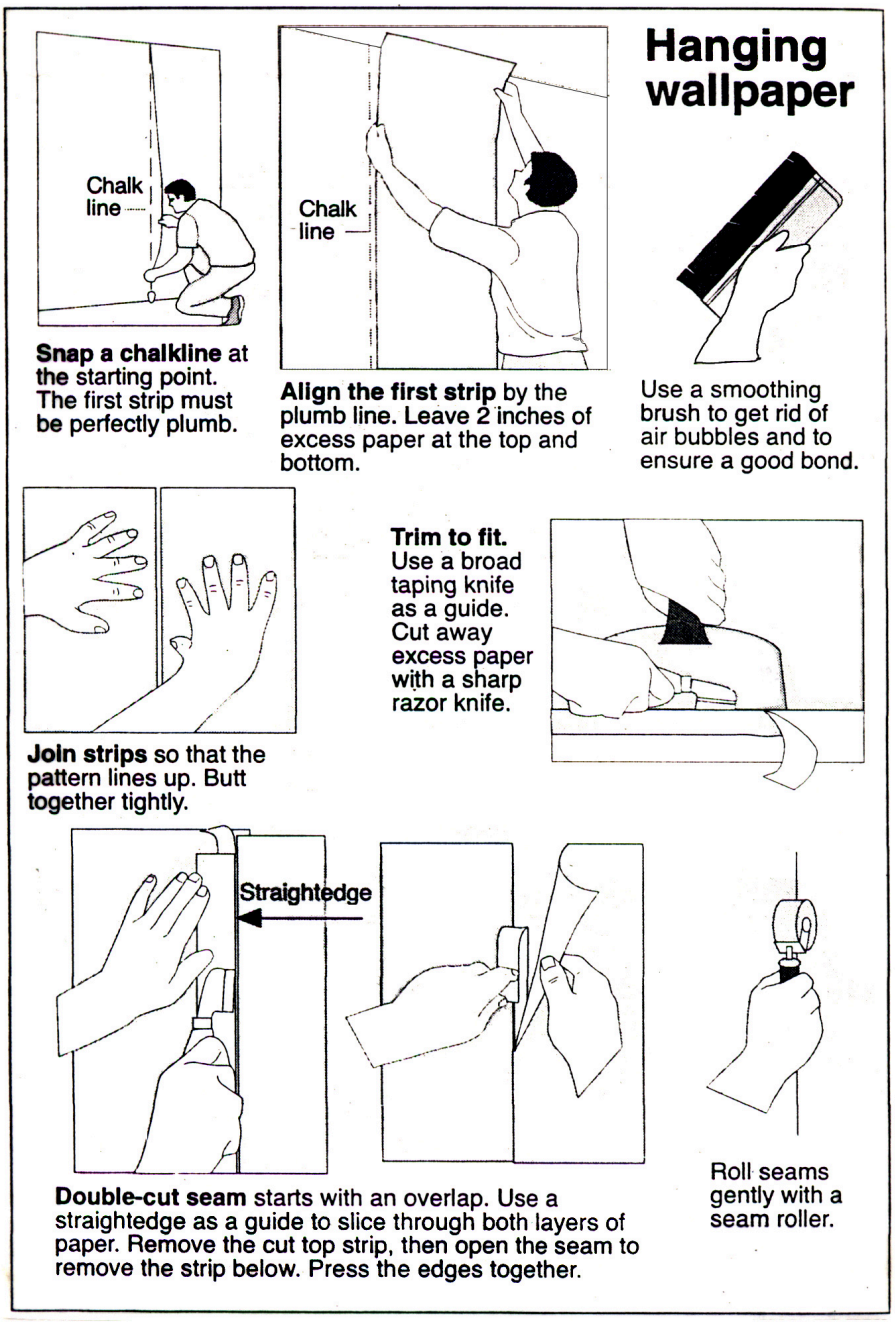
CLEANING UP

When you are done trimming each piece, wash down the strip with a dripping wet sponge to remove any paste that has smeared on the paper. You'll also want to wash adjacent wall, ceiling, and woodwork areas. Use warm water, and change it often. The paste can be difficult to see, but – if you don't remove it thoroughly – it will show up when it dries, and the residue is very difficult to remove then. For this reason, it's a good idea to go over the entire room with clean water when you're finished installing all the paper.

The paper will shrink slightly as it dries, so small wrinkles will stretch out. Wallpaper usually dries overnight. For particularly stubborn areas that won't stay pasted down, try **seam adhesive** (a “super glue” for wallpaper; it usually comes in a tube).

> As you gain experience and more confidence, you can move on to tougher rooms, more temperamental papers, and more unusual areas, like ceilings and arches. But, start simple and easy, and you'll soon get the “hang” of it.

QUICK REFERENCE: HANGING WALLPAPER



Home Repair Resource center

Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

WWW.HRRC-CH.ORG **+1.216.381.6100** **2520 Noble Road, Cleveland Heights, OH 44121**

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