

A guide to wallpapering

First thing's first

Preparation may seem like the boring bit, but prepare the job properly and the rest will be much easier and give you a much better finish. If you want to paint or paper the ceiling, then do these first, before you start on the walls. Move the furniture out of the way to give yourself room to work. Don't forget to put a dust cloth down to cover the floor and furniture around the area where you are working.

Making a start

Get all your tools together before you start. Having a good paste table, a pasting brush, a sponge, a plumb line, a tape measure, a sharp knife, a pair of decorating scissors and a bucket of clean water will make the job easier and quicker. Strip away old wall coverings by soaking with wallpaper stripper or warm water and detergent. When fully saturated, scrape off with a stripping knife. Make sure all traces of stripper or detergent are rinsed from the paintwork and wash your hands thoroughly. Should you find the wall covering difficult to scrape off, it is probably because the surface is, at least partially, impervious. Painted woodchip, embossed and washable papers can be particularly stubborn, and are best tackled by scoring with a knife or wire brush before soaking. If you have a large area to work on, consider using a steam stripper.

Cutting your wallpaper

Carefully measure the length required (normally the height of the wall) and cut from the roll, allowing an extra 50mm (2") or so at top and bottom for final trimming (see fig. 1). To start with, only cut one length at a time. Consider where you will start hanging. For boldly patterned wallpapers choose a focal point such as a chimney breast or the dominant wall, and

plan to hang from the centre (see fig. 2). If you have a plainer design, start in a corner, usually behind the door (see fig. 4). Before cutting the next lengths, ensure that the pattern matches up with the one on the piece you have just hung.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Pasting

Always use the paste recommended on the roll label or leaflet. Follow the paste manufacturer's instructions carefully, especially when mixing, to ensure the correct consistency. When applying paste it is important to avoid getting it on the surface of the paper. Any paste on the front should be carefully removed with a damp sponge. Once the paste has been properly mixed, lay the paper face down on the table and start to brush the paste from the top, down the length and out towards the edges, herringbone fashion, so that it evenly covers the surface (see fig. 3). Don't pull the brush back across the edge of the paper as it will leave paste on the front. Fold the pasted length inwards, bottom to middle and top to middle. Once pasted, all wall coverings need to 'soak' for a period of time before hanging. This allows the moisture to be absorbed and the paper to fully expand. To ensure the edges do not curl back and dry out, the folded length can be loosely rolled to hold them together during the soaking period. For very long lengths, fold like a concertina.



Figure 3

DIY Top Tip



Starting off straight

Few walls are truly square or perfectly vertical. To overcome this, and to avoid your pattern going askew, always mark a vertical pencil line against a plumb line or long spirit level (you can make your own plumb line with a weight attached to a thin string). Allow the plumb to swing freely until it is at rest before putting your pencil mark down the wall behind the string. Don't hang the paper directly on top of the line – leave it showing by about 5mm (1/4") and hang parallel with it. Next, smooth down and brush back the length away from the line.



Figure 4

Hanging

Once the paper has soaked, identify the top of the wallcovering to ensure it is the right way up (you might even want to mark the top on the back of the sheet before pasting), and carry it to the wall. The first length is normally hung in a corner (see fig. 4), with subsequent lengths working away from this. Holding the top of the length, carefully open the top fold and lightly stick the top half of the length to the wall. Allow about 50mm (2") at the top of the wall for trimming off, and slide the wall covering exactly into position. Smooth down the middle with a paperhanger's brush, ensuring a good butt joint and pattern match, and then work out towards the edges, removing air bubbles as you go (see fig. 5). Open the bottom fold and continue to smooth the paper down to the skirting (see fig. 6). Carefully run the back of the scissors along the angle of the ceiling and the wall at the top, and the skirting at the bottom, to make an impression of where the wall covering has to be cut off (see fig. 7). Gently pull the length away, trim off the excess with scissors, and brush back into place. Carefully wipe surplus paste from the surface of the paper and from the skirting and ceiling with a damp sponge to avoid the paste marking the paper when it dries. Wash sponge frequently.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

