

How to hang wallpaper

Which tools to use:

- paste (use the strongest available recommended on the wallpaper)
- bucket
- sharp knife (like a trimming knife)
- pasting brush
- dry hanging brush
- seam roller
- pasting table (they're cheaper than you think!)



Planning

As wallpaper will look the best when hung according to the layout of your room, it is important to determine where to start wallpapering before anything else. If you're going to wallpaper above the fireplace, you must start here. Find the middle of the fireplace and decide whether you want a piece of wallpaper on each side or whether you want this to be the middle of your first piece.

If you don't have a fireplace, or you're not going to wallpaper it, you should start on the wall with the main window, working away from the window on either side. This will ensure the pattern will be the same either side of the window. Although this might cause an overlap in another area of the room, it will look better around the window. It will also prevent joins showing up more than necessary. As both sides of the wallpapering will have to meet somewhere, make sure it's in a less conspicuous corner (for example, the corner behind the door). This will give a much better finish than when you start at one end of the window and wallpaper all the way round.

How to get started

Draw a plumbline to ensure the wallpaper will hang straight. You can hang a weight from a piece of string to mark the plumbline. Measure the height of the wall, adding about 100mm. This will help you hang the wallpaper, and after hanging, you can trim the excess paper.

Cut the paper with a sharp knife, for example a trimming knife. Now cut the next piece of wallpaper, making sure the pattern aligns with the pattern on the first piece of wallpaper. Then, after you've hung the first piece on the wall, the third piece can be cut, aligning the pattern again with the second piece, etc. This is the best way to prevent any major mistakes in cutting the paper!

Paste the first piece by (on one side) overlapping the edges of the table with the wallpaper. This will prevent paste from getting on your table on this end. Starting at the centre of the paper, work the paste to the overhanging end of the paper. Then move the paper up and hang it slightly over the edge at the other side of the table. Now paste this end of the paper. Carefully fold the pasted end of the paper before moving along and lining up the paper. This will help soak the paste into the paper and prevent any paste from sticking to your carpet! After pasting the other end, fold the end neatly to the already folded part, aligning the edges. Let it soak for a while in order to make the paper easier to work with and it will also ensure a better adhesion to the wall. While this is soaking, you can paste the second piece of wallpaper. Make sure however, that you keep an eye on the soaking times.

To hang your wallpaper, make sure you only unfold the end of your wallpaper that will reach the ceiling. Start hanging it along the plumbline. Make sure you do leave an overhang, so that you can trim along the ceiling later. While you're hanging the paper, smooth it by using your dry hanging brush. Work towards the edges of the paper. Now you can unfold the bottom end of the paper and press it slightly against the wall, pushing any air bubbles out to the sides. You can now trim the overhang with a trimming knife.

The following pieces can now be lined up to match the pattern. It is best if the paper overruns slightly to the other wall. As the walls hardly ever will join at a straight angle, this will prevent any gaps. You will then have to double-check the next wall by drawing another plumbline. Now continue papering the wall.

A few obstacles you'll always come across

- Doors. You'll be very lucky if your wallpaper matches up at your doorframes! Most of the time you will have to cut around it and nice and neat too. Here's how to do it: If you come up to the door, just start hang the wallpaper like you would normally. Gently feel the position of the frame through the paper and mark where the frame has to be cut out from the paper. Start cutting in towards the frame from the paper that covers the doors and which will be discarded. That way you have the least chance of getting it wrong. Get rid of most of the discard paper (so you can work better) and trim the wallpaper neatly around the frame.
- Sockets and switches. Always turn the electricity off if you want to work behind the socket or switch. Identify the shape of the socket/switch behind the paper, and cut, starting in the middle, towards the edge of the paper that needs to be removed. Loosen the socket or switch, cut away the excess paper and neatly fold the rest behind the socket/switch.
- Light fittings and other circular objects. Again lightly feel the shape of the object through the overhanging paper. Cut from the centre of the circle out to the edge of the shape (so that it will look like a pie-shape) and fold the paper away. Trim away the excess paper.

Top tips for a better finish

- Nothing is more annoying than having to fish your brush out of the bucket and getting paste all over your hands. There are now brushes available that you can hook on the rim of the bucket, leaving you with clean hands.
- Make sure you check your paste when you hang vinyl wallpaper, as vinyl has difficulty sticking to itself.
- To remove air bubbles, it is very important to work quick and neat. Make a small incision in the air bubble when the paper is still wet, apply some paste behind it, and carefully smooth the paper over.
- Always be careful when you use the seam roller. Whereas it might help you smoothing the edges of your wallpaper, it also might smooth your pattern if you're not careful! It can also leave a sheen on certain paper, so practice on a test bit first, to establish the amount of pressure it allows you to use.
- Don't get paste on your table! It can be difficult sometimes to get wallpaper paste off the front of your wallpaper, so be careful.
- In order to reduce the amount of off-cuts, it is sometimes better to use two rolls at the same time to align the pattern of your wallpaper.
- It is not advisable to use a roller to apply paste to your wallpaper, unless the paper is really thick. If it's too thin, your paper will stick and roll around your roller.

- Turn off radiators in the room you want to wallpaper, especially if you have to wallpaper behind them. The heat from the radiator is likely to dry out the paper too quickly, leaving it to come off the wall.