

# Wallpaper is a project that most anyone can do well

By Doris A. Black

If you've never installed wallpaper before, it may seem like a daunting task. But with the proper tools and a clear set of instructions, it can be a rewarding do-it-yourself project.

Selecting the right wallpaper for your chosen area can be the most difficult part of the process. There are several types of wallpaper and thousands of patterns to choose from. Fortunately, design books are available to help you with the selection process. Once you've chosen wallpaper, the next step is to apply it. Here's how.

## Preparing and Measuring Walls

Most wallpaper will hide minor wall imperfections, such as corners that aren't square or flaws in window alignment. However, major cracks and holes should be filled before wallpapering. Newly plastered walls should be allowed to dry thoroughly, primed and then sized. If your space currently has wallpaper, you should remove it first. Most vinyl wallpaper installed in the last 10 years is a cinch to remove. Just pull it slowly from the edge and it will come away from the wall in one piece – no spraying of adhesive removers is required. If your current wallpaper does not come off so easily, you'll need to score it and use an adhesive remover.

To determine how much wallpaper you'll need, you must first calculate the square footage of the room. Measure the height and width of each wall and multiply the two to get the square footage. For soffits and other unusual surfaces, add their width and height to the wall's measurements and calculate the square footage. Subtract 10 square feet for each door and window per wall. Add the square footage of each wall and you'll have the total wall area.

A single roll of wallpaper will cover 30 square feet. To determine how many rolls you need, divide the total wall area by 30. Normal trim waste is around 15% per roll, but keep in mind that it can vary greatly depending on the spacing of the pattern.

Although most salespeople at a professional wall-covering store will be able to determine how many rolls of wallpaper you need, you may not find the same expertise at a home improvement or discount store, so familiarize yourself with the formula. Make sure all your rolls come from the same dye lot. Each roll will be identified with a dye lot number. Those with the same number were run with the same ink batch and the colors will be consistent. Purchase all the wallpaper you need at once. If you don't and need to come back for more, the dye lots may be different.

## Selecting Wallpaper Design

If you're looking for something easy to install, choose pre-pasted vinyl wallpaper. It is easy to hang, a breeze to maintain and can be removed in a matter of minutes when you're ready for a change. Even so, you should think long-



term when choosing a pattern, especially for children's rooms. Young boys and girls will outgrow fluffy ducks in no time, and the next thing you'll know, they'll want basketballs or horses. Wallpapers with stripes are challenging to install and require a certain degree of patience.

## Installing Wallpaper

You'll need the following tools to do the job right: scissors, a straight edge, a paper tray, a tape measure, a seam roller and a plumb.

When your wall is prepared, use a plumb and a pencil to draw a straight line down the length of the wall 1/8-inch from the corner. This will ensure that your first piece is straight. Fill the paper tray with water and place it on the floor right below where the first piece of wallpaper will hang. Measure and cut the first strip of paper and submerge it into the paper tray for a few minutes. Then lift the strip into place and smooth it onto the wall, starting at the center and working outward to eliminate air bubbles. Some people use a wallpaper brush to do this, while others prefer to use their hands. Continue to work your way around the room, matching up the pattern of each strip and butting the edges. After you have hung a few strips, go back and use a seam roller to seal the edges of the strips together.

A certain amount of trepidation is normal when tackling your first wallpaper project. Remember though, like paint, wallpaper is not permanent. Think boldly, act with confidence, and you'll be amazed at what you can accomplish. ✂