

# WALL MAKEOVER

## Hang wallpaper like the professionals

By TARA HAWKINS for Smart  
PHOTOS BY KATE PENN for Smart

Steve Rickrode of New Oxford has been hanging wallpaper professionally for more than 40 years.

In addition to having his own business, he also is a contractor for York Wallcoverings in York.

While a professional installation costs \$30 to \$35 per single roll, doing it yourself costs relatively little. With the right tools and Rickrode's expert instructions, your room can have a fresh new look for fall.

### Choosing your wallpaper

Finding the right paper for your room might be one of the hardest steps. There are thousands of choices!


Keep your budget in mind. Wallpaper prices can vary from \$16 to hundreds per roll.

Before ordering, take your room dimensions into the store. A salesperson will be able to figure out how much paper you need.

### Preparing the walls

Repair any cracks or blemishes. The paper might temporarily mask problems, but over time, they will show.

If the drywall is new or has not been properly sealed, use a good primer. Rickrode recommends using Zinsser's Shieldz Universal White Wallpaper Primer. A gallon costs about \$16 at Lowe's.



Steve Rickrode rolls over wallpaper as he demonstrates how to patch a damaged area on existing paper during a seminar at York Wallcoverings.



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Rickrode trims wallpaper to demonstrate how to properly paper a corner during a seminar at York Wallcoverings.

### Inspecting your bolts

Don't be surprised to come away with half of the number of wallpaper rolls than you expected. Wall coverings are sold by the bolt. A bolt is a double roll.

Each bolt will list the pattern name and run number. Make sure all have the exact same run number.

### Cutting your wallpaper

Start in the least conspicuous corner in the room. Do not assume that your corner is plumb. Measure out a plumb line and draw a line on the wall.

Cut one piece of paper at a time leaving at least 3 extra inches. You will be able to trim the excess at the ceiling and floor once it is in place.

### Pasting

Many wallpapers and borders come pre-pasted. These only require submerging the paper in water until it is thoroughly wet. The water activates the glue.

Most installers prefer to use a paste activator. It keeps the paper wet longer and makes installation easier. You can use paste even if the paper is pre-pasted.

Before soaking the wallpaper, roll your pre-cut sheet inside out and place it in the water.

If using paste, simply roll out the paper upside down on your work surface. Use a paint roller to apply a very thin coat — only enough to wet the surface.

Re-measure the paper after it is wet. It will expand slightly and will not shrink back to its original dimensions.

### Hanging

Using only your hands, begin placing your paper at the top of the wall. Try not to drag it across the wall.

Once it is all in place, use the brush or plastic smoother in an up-and-down motion. Don't stretch the paper. Like paint, paper does not look perfect when it is wet.

### Finishing

Once the sheet is secured, use the 3-inch Spackle blade and OLFA knife to trim the excess paper from the top and bottom.

Use a damp sponge to clean the excess paste off of the paper. Roll the seam and wash over it again. Towel dry the entire surface.

### CHECKLIST

The right tools can make the job a lot easier.

- OLFA cutter with built-in blade snapper
- Seam roller
- 1½-inch putty knife
- 3" Spackle blade
- 6" Spackle blade
- Nail bag to hold tools
- Scissors
- Brush or plastic smoother
- Tape measure
- Ultra-clear paste
- Ladder
- White rag or towel
- Sponges

### SMART TIP

Suzanne Verneti, store manager at York Wallcoverings, recommends allowing the paper to dry overnight before hanging anything on the wall.

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