

1. F-A-Q: Whitestock Lining Papers

1. What are whitestock lining papers? Whitestock lining papers are soft fibrous papers made of recycled paper or chemical pulp. They're used as an underlayment for fine wallcoverings. Liners between five and ten dollars a roll are a prudent choice under showroom-quality wallcoverings which can easily cost as much as a hundred dollars per roll. Acid free lining papers (AF-20 and AF-40) are in a special class. [see this FAQ about acid free types]

2. What do lining papers do? Lining papers are like an underlayment for carpet or a liner for drapes - they help the finished product look better for a longer time. The main reason for installing a liner is not to "smooth out the walls." The walls should be smooth already. The main reason for installing a liner is so that the finish paper will grab the liner and dry quickly, which avoids split seams. Lining papers provide a smooth receptive surface for a pasted sheet of wallpaper, and soften the wall somewhat. They absorb excess moisture from the finish paper allowing wallpaper to dry quickly and safely. Lining papers secure the installation by buffering and mitigating the effects of the wall and the room environment on the wallpaper.

3. Give me an example. First, liners can be used as a sacrificial layer. If a wall surface is suspect for any of about a half-dozen reasons, the drying of the liner will prove it! [see this FAQ about wall prep]. Better to have a seam rupture on a lining paper than on a finish paper. The liner can be repaired whereas a popped seam on a finish paper leads to disaster. When it comes to the environment, bathrooms with showers put lots of moisture in the air. Over time, ambient moisture causes the fibers in the wallpaper to expand slightly and then contract slightly when the wallpaper dries. This expansion/contraction cycle might not sound like much, but if there's too much movement, this movement shows up at the seams. The expansion/contraction cycles can result in seam cupping, splitting, or failures. These same cycles can happen in other rooms due to variations in moisture, dryness, or temperature.

4. You said that a liner can rupture a suspect wall surface. Why does this happen? The leading causes of seam failures include: 1. paint primers that do not adequately seal the wall because of dusty walls or cheap primer ingredients; 2. lack of a WALLCOVERING primer over the paint or paint primer; 3. underlying paint films with a weak bond to their neighboring paint films. All three of these are a concern because of the tremendous pulling power (contraction) of paper, whether that paper is a lining paper or a finish wallpaper. Popped seams are especially likely to happen in two very different situations: in new construction where the walls were prepared for paint - but not for wallpaper; and in very old houses which have multiple paint layers, one of which has a weak bond.

5. When should liners be used? Lining papers COULD be used anytime the surface is suspect as stated above. They SHOULD be used anytime the finish paper is especially sensitive, expensive, or more important than normal wallcovering. For example, under distemper (blockprints) and other water-sensitive inks; when the finish paper is thin (handprints, especially those with white, wide-open backgrounds); when traditional European papers are used; when unusual materials such as handmade papers are used; and anytime paste might strike through and damage the finish paper, for example when hanging vintage wallpaper from the mid-20th century.

6. Won't the installation cost more? Yes. However, lining papers are low cost and can be hung quickly - more than twice as fast as finish paper. The finish paper will hang much better and faster over lining papers than without them. Lining papers add value in three ways: they make the wallpaper installation easier; they give the installer more control over the installation; and they improve the looks and duration of the finished product.

7. Should I hang them horizontally? This technique (called cross-lining or railroading) is not necessary. It is necessary, however, to avoid wired seams when hanging lining papers – a wired seam causes a slight overlap that may show through the finish paper. A good rule of thumb during installation is to aim for a very slight gap - 1/16 of an inch. This slight gap allows for quick hanging of the liner. This gap can easily be closed up if you want a butt seam, but a butt seam is hardly ever needed.

8. What kind of paste should I use? Lining papers hang well with a thinned-down clear. A good proportion is one quart water to one gallon clear premixed adhesive (32 oz. to 128 oz.). This paste may seem light, but the moisture sinks into the liner quickly, resulting in a very tacky but light paste that dries out quickly and smoothly.

9. Should I size these liners? Yes. Many paperhangers don't bother to size liner, but there are advantages to sizing. First, sizing reduces the porosity of these very absorbent papers. Sizing promotes adhesion of the finish paper, so a weaker adhesive can be used when hanging the finish paper. This makes clean-up quicker and easier. When the finish paper hits the sized liner the result is a sort of "adhesion sandwich." Sizing also gives better slip for positioning the pattern - the finish paper won't die on the wall. Also, removing a wrongly-placed strip is easier on a sized liner than on an unsized liner. Bonus: incorrect seam placement pencil marks on a sized wall can be easily removed. It's typical to end up with one set of correct pencil marks and dozens of wrong ones. These are confusing. If the liner is sized, the incorrect pencil marks come off with the swipe of a sponge.

10. How do I size? After hanging the liner, size with a dilute paste size. This can be made from wheat paste, cellulose paste, or a thinned-down clear paste. A good proportion is one part mixed paste to one part water. The size should be somewhat soupy and sink into the paper easily. Apply with 6-inch natural-bristle stain brush or similar. Using a sidelight, watch for the color change as the size is applied. Size usually dries within 20 minutes. Extra-tacky sizes can be mixed for special occasions (such as finish papers with seams that want to keep curling up). Mix 75% cellulose and 25% clay and thin to brushing or rolling consistency.

11. How are these liners packaged and what is the cost? WS-30 costs \$4.95 per single roll in a 30" width. AF-20 costs \$13.95 per single roll in a 20" width; AF-40 also costs \$13.95 per single roll and comes in a 40" width. All of the PH liners are packaged in 3-roll bolts. Shipping charges are extra. We ship UPS ground. You may order by phone, or e-mail. A 10% discount applies on an order of at least 33 s/r.

12. Any other tips? It's not a good idea to trim liner precisely against moldings. If the edges of the finish paper and the lining paper are exactly the same, there's a chance that both will pull away from the wall as they dry. The way to prevent this is to trim liner about 1/8 of an inch away from all moldings. In situations where this 1/8 difference might show (for example, in harsh sidelight at eye level or at a chairrail or under a very delicate finish paper) then it does make sense to trim exactly to the moldings. In that case some extra adhesive should be applied prior to the installation of the liner so that a "velcro" effect is created.