

F-A-Q: Acid Free Lining Paper

1. What's the difference between acid free liner and whitestock?

Like whitestock, acid free liner is a fibrous paper underlayment suitable for fine wallcoverings such as blockprints, screenprints, scenics, and handmade papers. Unlike whitestock, acid free liner is acid free. In addition to the normal things that all liners do, acid free papers have archival qualities - their pH neutrality and superior composition of rag fibers gives them far greater longevity. Acid free liner has excellent stability over a much longer period, perhaps as long as seventy-five to a hundred years.

2. What is acid free liner made of?

Acid free liner is composed of rag fibers which are longer than most paper fibers. These are not linters (left-overs from textile operations). They are rag fibers cut from cotton rags.

3. How do I know it's acid free?

The acid free liner stocked by Paper-Hangings has been tested by an independent lab (Integrated Paper Service) and found to have a pH of 7.4 measured by the TAPPI cold extract method.

4. What does it do for the installation other than to make it last longer?

ALL paper liners soften the wall, give the installer more control over seams, and help stability of the installation because paper sticks to paper better than to anything else. Otherwise, acid free liner does nothing that whitestock will not do, except that the installation will last longer. The "lasting longer" is the whole point.

5. Does acid free really make a difference?

Yes. The Blue Room of the White House was lined with acid free in 1995. When it came time for a change ten years later, the screenprint was removed by wet-stripping. The acid free liner looked as good as the day it was hung. The liner was simply hung over with a new wallpaper and there were no problems. That liner is still on the walls today.

6. I heard that the gold, silver and metallic inks used for wallpaper designs can become tarnished if you don't use acid free. Is this true?

No. Liners work from the backside. They help wallpaper dry out quickly, so they don't affect the surface of the wallpaper, except indirectly. Besides, real gold and silver are not generally used on wallpapers. So-called silver leaf, pewter leaf and Dutch gold leaf are made of alloys: tin, nickel and other base metals. "Metallic" inks are usually acrylics or microplastics which look like metal because of the dispersion of flakes in a medium. That said, some leaf and metallic papers are touchy. If you're worried about a fragile wallpaper, do use a liner but also think about your paste. A safer choice than a commercial adhesive might be wheat or cellulose. These are archival and have no preservatives, shelf life additives, and so on. [see our FAQs about wheat and cellulose pastes]

7. Who would want an installation that lasts over 15 years?

Many homeowners who choose a scenic costing thousands of dollars consider it a "legacy" installation that will be in the house for a very long time. Many reproduction wallpapers placed in historic houses are specific to the time and period of the house. These installations are planned to last as long as possible.

8. What adhesive should I use to hang acid free liners?

Best results have been obtained with a clear premixed vinyl adhesive diluted about 25%. This mixture flows freely so that the liner can relax after 10 minutes of booking time, yet this adhesive provides plenty of solids to anchor the liner to the wall. The adhesive can be applied with roller or pasting machine. Like all paper liners, acid free liners will contract a lot as they dry. Proper wall prep is essential.

9. Any other tips or tricks I should know about?

Shoot for just shy of a butt seam while hanging liner, something in the area of a 16th of an inch. Most paperhangers opt to use all of the roll, even a partial sheet, since seams in the liner will not show. If you're double-cutting the liner on the wall, be sure you have a well-sealed wall. It is not necessary to cross-line (hang horizontally).

*** ADDITIONAL SUPPORT *** is available. Email us anytime at rmkelly@paper-hangings.com. Our policy is to answer email questions within 24 hours. Please zero in on the problem or concern and be sure to add information about the surface, wallprep and wallcoverings. Thank You!