TRIMMING FAQ

or,

“More Than You Ever Wanted To Know About Trimming"

Below are guidelines for trimming lining papers from www.Paper-Hangings.Com
tel. 413-243-3489

1. Why liners?

Let’s begin at the beginning: Wallpaper expands about 1% after pasting and booking, then snaps back (contracts) when fully dry. These facts explain:
- where split seams come from (the seams that show white after drying, UGH)
- why lining paper has been used to prevent this for at least 250 years
- why liners work - they grab the seams, preventing the contraction
- why lining papers need to remain porous

2. What is blankstock?

For many years blankstock lining paper was the standard. Blankstock, off-white in color, is essentially ground-up trees (a true pulp paper) similar to newsprint. A limited amount of blankstock is still on the market, but is not available from www.paper-hangings.com

3. So what DO you have?

We have 2 types of paper liners: whitestock and acid free.

4. How are they alike?

A: Both are 30 inches wide, white, and 100% paper. Both demand a light touch and careful handling. The most important thing: they provide an absorbent surface for the finish wallcovering. This gives installers more control over setting, adjusting, and rolling the seams of the finish wallcovering. Without a liner, split seams are more likely to occur due to the natural contraction of wallpaper as it dries. Neither of our liners “smooth out the wall.” On the contrary, they both hug the wall tightly - sort of like a paper skin.

5. How do they differ?

A: They differ first by price: the acid free costs twice as much as the whitestock. But the only true advantage the acid free has over the whitestock is longevity. The acid free is made of rag fibers and is certified acid free (meaning, it has a neutral pH highly resistant to yellowing and breakdown over time). The acid free is more appropriate for a “timeless” installation such as one in a historic house, or under a scenic that’s a “legacy” installation - a decoration that’s intended to be up for a very long time and could be passed on to the next generation.

The whitestock is made of recycled paper which has had inks and other impurities removed. The whitestock is pure white and probably close to being acid free, but we have not had it tested for that.

Whitestock is a good all-around paper liner for use under handprints, block-prints, European wallpapers, vintage, handmade papers, and other decorative materials.

The acid free liner has a cardboard core and is secured with blue tape; the whitestock has no core and is secured with scotch tape. Both are put up in triple rolls: 36 sq. ft. per single roll; so, 108 sq. ft. per triple roll.

6. Should liners be used under nonwoven wallcoverings?

Generally, no. That said, the idea that nonwovens “do not expand or contract” is simply not true. The number of commercially-available nonwoven substrates (the material which is then printed on) is enormous. There is really no way to know the proportion of pulp fibers to synthetic fibers, or even what sorts of fibers are used. The main criterion used by manufacturers to determine the types and composition of their nonwovens appears to be cost. For these reasons, the question of whether to use a liner under a nonwoven boils down to a judgement call by the paperhanger in the field. That call will usually be “no.”

7. How should these liners be trimmed?

A: Snap-off blades or single-edge razor blades are commonly used. Many installers use a broadknife as a guide and other installers prefer handtrimming. It’s always important to press down firmly while trimming. Liners under fine wallcoverings don’t need to be trimmed exactly against the moldings. One way to get a consistent small gap (1/8 inch or less) is to get ahold of a “euni-tool” from Eunice Bokstrom (see below).

8. Why the small gap?

A: The reason you might want to leave a slight gap is that the finish paper and the liner will dry together after installation of the finish paper. If the finish paper is hung and trimmed exactly on top of the liner, the two layers may pull away from the molding due to the strength of the contraction. Leaving a slight gap when trimming a liner against the molding avoids this potential problem.

HOWEVER, you might want to trim right next to the molding under critical lighting conditions where the gap might show: for example, when installing a thin or a very reflective wallcovering over a mantel at eye level.

9. So why do your liners "demand a light touch and careful handling"?

A: The whole point of 100% paper liners is to allow the finish wallcovering to grab like crazy at the seam, thus all but eliminating split seams. So, lining papers need to remain porous. They don’t leave the factory with ink or coatings, like most wallcoverings. The only thing to protect the paper fibers is a thin, factory-applied size. This “size” from the factory is not to be confused with the “size” which is sometimes applied to the liner after installation (see below). The trade-off for keeping the liners absorbent is that the paper fibers will sometimes shred rather than cut cleanly. Your best defense against shredding: firm pressure against the wall and fresh blades.

10. What about adhesive?

A: We’ve found best results with a diluted clear premix. We advise adding at least 20% water to the premix by volume (this testing was done using Roman's 234). The resulting paste is tacky enough to book easily and anchor the liner to the wall, but fluid enough to dry out smoothly. A booking time of around 10 minutes is recommended. Double-pasting (or at least double-brushing) may be necessary. Machine, roller, or brush are all options.

11. Why do the liners expand after pasting?

A: Both liners are paper, which is fibrous (woven, not nonwoven). Because liners are made on a moving web, somewhat like fabric, they have a weft and a warp (weft fibers go left to right, warp fibers go up and down). Essentially, paper liners have a “grain." When paper is pasted, some of the fibers (the weft fibers) expand with moisture, making them larger. This expansion across the width is close to 1%.

12. What does the 1% amount to?

A: For our liners, the dry width is 30” and the wet width after 10 minutes will be about 30 3/8”. For the mathematicians: 30 x 16 sixteenths = 480 sixteenths (total wet width). Therefore, 1% would be 4.8 sixteenths, or, close to 5 sixteenths. 3/8 inch = 6 sixteenths. While expansion happens across the width, the other way (the height) usually doesn’t expand at all.

13. Any tips for cutting?

A: Firm pressure/fresh blades. Also, for fussy work around moldings, a “sawing” technique can be used: this method is similar to handtrimming along a molding. Single-edge blades come in several varieties: regular number 9 (.09 of an inch thick); number 9 blue blades (carbon steel); and heavy-duty number 12 (.12 of an inch thick). In handtrimming, a single-edge blade is held between the thumb and first two fingers; the tip of the blade is pressed into the paper; you then bear down and make the cut, maintaining contact to the molding with your remaining fingers.

With the “sawing” technique, you press down into the paper as just described but then pull and push - pull and push - cutting through the paper fibers in an up-and-down, or sawing motion. This makes a cleaner cut, especially around complicated moldings. But here too, a slight gap is a good idea, for the reasons given above.

14. Do you recommend sizing?

A: We do. Sizing is made by adding water to paste; it should be about the consistency of buttermilk or a low-cal milkshake. Sizing can be spread out on the liner quickly with a 6-inch natural-bristle stain bush. Use a side light to check coverage and look for the color change. Sizing usually dries within 15 minutes.

15. So why is sizing important?

A: Sizing helps the finish paper glide rather than “die” on the wall; the finish paper can be more easily slid up and down to get the best match. Also, dying on the wall means that the finish paper gets more or less laminated to the liner. That's not great - you might just want to readjust or remove a strip during the job. Down the road, a sized installation will strip a lot easier than one that is not sized.

Sizing helps to create a sort of “paste sandwich” so that the paste from the finish paper sinks only partially into the liner. This creates a predictable window of time within which the seams of the wallcovering can be adjusted and rolled. A stopwatch is helpful. Sizing is definitely not priming. Acrylic primers (such as Shieldz) seal the liner, and this practically eliminates porosity (the absorbent quality of the liner).

— the end —