

How to Remove Wallpaper



Patrick Shields

About Patrick Shields



Patrick works in private homes, public spaces and historic buildings up and down the East Coast of the U.S. His projects range from small home decorating to large historic restoration projects.

His most recent historic wallpaper projects include **President James Madison's Montpelier**, the **William Paca House** in Annapolis and the **Dumbarton House** in Georgetown.

Patrick's work has appeared on HGTV and in many magazines and journals like Country Living Magazine and Architectural Digest. In addition to his wallpaper work, he also designs decorative paint projects. He has designed and decorated walls and ceilings with hand drawn, painted or gilded decorative paint finishes.

Visit his web site to learn more about his work. You may contact him at 202-744-2890 or email him - pat @patrickshields.com.

[Visit my blog and web site](#)

[Like me on Facebook](#)

Follow me on [Twitter: @PaperShields](#)

Connect on [LinkedIn](#)

Watch me on [YouTube](#)

How to remove wallpaper

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction: to strip or not? | 4 |
| When to use the dry method | 7 |
| When you must use the wet method | 9 |
| Are chemicals an option? | 11 |
| Tips and Tricks on wet stripping | 12 |
| One more thing ... | 14 |
| Products | 15 |

How to remove wallpaper

Introduction: To strip or not to strip?

Most people do not want to ask this question:

“How do you remove wallpaper?”

It’s understandable. It’s a messy job. One we’d like to avoid.

So the question I get, that seems to pop up (pun intended) the most, is:

“Can I paper over wallpaper?”

Well, the answer is “Yes.”

But, a qualified yes.

How to remove wallpaper

You can install paper over your existing wallpaper if ...

1. the existing paper was installed without a lot of seam lapping; if there is lapping, the seams will show through the next layer of wallpaper.
2. the existing paper is firmly secured to the walls with no peeling or mildew.
3. the coating on the existing paper is compatible with the adhesive that the manufacturer recommends.



How to remove wallpaper

It's fifty-fifty.

From my experience, half the time you can paper over the existing wallpaper with the right preparation. If you do have to remove the paper, it is often fairly easy to do. DON'T let it be an obstacle for redecorating.

Some papers are made to be stripped. The best way to find out is to start pulling the paper off the wall. Strippable wall covering should come off in a solid sheet leaving a paste residue on the wall. If this happens, you are in luck. You have a strippable wall covering. You can go straight to the section on tips for wet stripping. It will explain how to get the paste residue off.

How to remove wallpaper

When to use the dry method

Some wallpapers are made to be dry stripped. Just try a corner of the wall covering. If it pulls off in a single sheet, then it was made strippable. The paste that was used to put it up can sometimes be papered over. However, if you want to paint, you will need to clean the paste off the wall. Read the section on wet stripping for instructions on how to remove paste residue.



How to remove wallpaper

There are some problems that may occur when you dry strip. Here are some possibilities:

- A layer of vinyl comes off leaving a paper backing on the wall. You have a paperback vinyl wallpaper that will need wet stripping.
- If the paper does not strip off easily, then you have a paper that's not made to be stripped dry. You will need to use the wet method.
- If the drywall under the strippable paper becomes damaged because the paint comes off with the wallpaper or the surface of the drywall comes off, then you need professional help.

How to remove wallpaper

When you must use the wet method

When you pull on the wallpaper and it ...

1. doesn't come off, or,
2. the surface vinyl comes off but a paperback is left on the wall,

you will need to use the **wet method** of stripping.

How to remove wallpaper

Paper that is not strippable needs to be soaked with water to loosen the paste. Sometimes, you may need to use chemicals to remove the paper. If the wallpaper has been coated with a vinyl varnish you must get through the varnish to get to the paste with water. In order to do this you need to sand or score the wall paper and then spray with water. Start at the top of the wall and spray water until the entire wall is wet. Then begin stripping.



How to remove wallpaper

Are chemicals an option?

I prefer to use water to remove wallpaper. However, there are many products available if you prefer to try another method.

These products actually function like fabric softeners. The chemicals and enzymes that are added to the water break down the starch in the paste, making paper removal a bit easier. I have included a list products and resources with links at the end of the e-book that may help you make a decision about what to use.

How to remove wallpaper

Tips on wet stripping wallpaper

Wet stripping wallpaper can get messy. Whether you are using straight up water or using a removal product, I suggest you help control the mess by following these steps:

1. First put down a plastic sheet.
2. Then on top of the sheet I place a folded drop cloth.



How to remove wallpaper

3. On top of the drop cloth, I place six or seven layers of newspaper. Newspaper absorbs the moisture from the wall when I spray water on it with a pump sprayer. The wallpaper and the residue of the glue that comes down lands on the newspaper. You can then fold it up and throw it away. Don't let the water soak through this pile to your floors or you'll have a bigger mess to deal with.
4. Finally, the only other tip I can give you is to have patience. Sometimes it takes five or six soakings with water or chemical removers in order to make the residue of the wallpaper wet enough to start to come down. But it will come down.

How to remove wallpaper

One more thing ...

Stripping paper does take time. After you've removed the wallpaper and the paste residue, the walls need to be thoroughly washed.

I like to use a scrub brush or sponge scrubber that you use on pots and pans. Then I take clean water, sponges, clean rags and wipe down all the residue.

All the effort to have clean walls will be well worth it when you go to paint or reinstall wallpaper.

How to remove wallpaper

Products

There are many wallpaper removal products available. Below are links to products and other resources to get the job done.

Forum discussion about best products to remove wallpaper

<http://ths.gardenweb.com/forums/load/kitchbath/msg0321464528299.html>

A 'how-to' article about removing wallpaper

<http://removewallpaperpaste.com/>

Roman Decorating Products – wallpaper removal

http://www.romandecoratingproducts.com/technical_how_to_removal.html

DIY: Remove Wallpaper Faster with These 5 Shortcuts

<http://www.diy-life.com/2010/08/25/removing-wallpaper/>

Wagner 1-Gallon Wallpaper Steamer

<http://www.amazon.com/Wagner-Products-282018-1-Gallon-Wallpaper/dp/B0009XEL40>