

How To Create A New Look With Wallpaper and Molding

By Jeanne Thompson

When you're redecorating a room the idea of repainting the walls may be the first thing that comes to mind. However, wallpaper and molding could be the extra touches that make a dramatic difference. Wallpaper is easier to apply today since it is already coated with adhesive. Simply moisten the strips with water and you're ready to go. And best of all, most vinyl and vinyl-coated wallpapers can be stripped off easily the next time you're ready for a change.

When you're tired of four walls painted the same color, wallpaper can provide a significant change. Certain prints look great from floor to ceiling while other styles may look better used on only one wall or halfway up the wall. Combining wallpaper with a partially painted or paneled wall works well in many rooms.

There are so many choices in wallpaper patterns and textures, you're sure to find something perfect for your needs. Florals and stripes are popular choices for bedrooms, while family rooms and bathrooms perk up with bold geometric and nautical designs as well as plaids, bold flowers and embossed metallics.

When you have a particular design theme in mind, wallpaper can make it easier to carry out. Whether your theme is country, modern or traditional, wallpaper manufacturers have a design that will work for you. Current styles in American country include colonial and Southwestern motifs as well as denim looks, antique flags, gingham checks and rugby stripes. French country patterns have always been popular for kitchens and bedrooms. If you prefer contemporary looks, you'll find everything from marbled textures and apparel-influenced hounds tooth prints to fossilized leaves.

Internationally inspired designs from China, Japan and India are increasingly popular as well as nature themes such as bamboo, grass and stone. New photographic technology has even brought realistic ocean waves, sand pebbles and flower-filled meadows to glossy wallpaper. Self-adhesive borders and appliqués make it possible to change a room quickly and easily. Borders in a variety of whimsical designs feature cartoon characters, sports heroes and other designs perfect for children's rooms.

If you've visited model homes recently, you've no doubt noticed the popularity of using moldings to enhance the appearance of every room in the home. Moldings have always provided an easy way to cover unattractive corners or edges where painted ceilings and wallpaper meet. Today they're used on cabinets and shelves, walls, stairwells and picture frames.

The creative use of moldings is a quick and easy way to update an older home or give a new house a more refined appearance. Crown moldings bring an air of sophistication to a room, while dividing walls horizontally with molding can make a narrow room seem wider. Molding colors that contrast with walls can take a room from plain to elegant.

Decorative molding can be used to create wall panels, wainscoting or ceiling trim. Cornices give a room sculptured elegance and help to soften the angles where wall and ceilings meet. You can accentuate the three-dimensional look of moldings by adding painted shadows or highlights. Moldings usually look best painted a lighter shade than panels or in a contrasting color. The beauty of molding is that it instantly provides any room with a more finished, unified appearance.

Today's moldings are easy to install. Polyurethane moldings have the appearance of plaster or wood molding for half the cost. Polyurethane resists moisture and will not rot, decay or fall victim to insect damage like wood. Pieces can be cut, drilled, nailed and screwed just like wood, or trim head drywall screws may be used as fasteners.

You'll find a wide variety of ready-made moldings at lumberyards, hardware and home improvement stores. You can choose from straight panels, wood and polyurethane as well as corners, crests, etc. Be careful to select a type of molding that fits the style of the room. A contemporary or casual room will look cleaner with a straighter, no frills type of molding, while a formal dining or living room could benefit from a more elegant crown molding. You can also combine straight and curved moldings and panels to create a Rococo or French-inspired decor. Study home decorating magazines and model homes for creative ways to combine wallpaper and molding, then talk with a sales consultant at the home improvement store to coordinate your room measurements with the materials you need to complete the project.