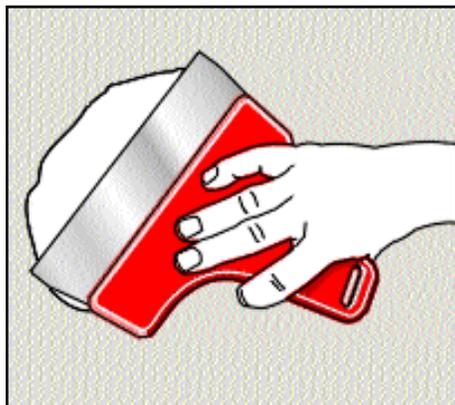


Introduction



In this 'How to' you'll learn how to create the ideal base for redecorating your walls and ceilings. You'll be guided through techniques for removing existing wall coverings, steps for filling holes and cracks in plaster, and the way to tackle gloss-painted walls.

It's worth spending the time to prepare your surfaces before redecorating. The results of your labour will be clear when you come to apply that new paint or wallpaper: no bumps or cracks to spoil your new look.

What you'll need

Materials

Coarse glasspaper 40-80 grit
 Fine filler
 Patching plaster
 Duck tape

Tools & equipment

For removing a radiator
 Two adjustable spanners
 Bucket
 Old towels
 Radiator bleed valve key
 Small bowl

For repairing plasterwork

Cork sanding block
 Filling knives – more flexible than a stripping knife
 Plasterer's hawk – for holding plaster or filler
 Plasterer's small tool – leaf and square
 Plastering trowel

For stripping walls and ceilings.

Bucket, sponge and pasting brush or pump up garden spray
 Dust sheets
 Plastic floor covering (oversite DPC polythene is best)
 Scaffold boards
 Scratch pad
 Step ladders and decorators' trestles (band stands)
 Stripping knife

Hints

- Save time by buying or hiring a wallpaper steam stripper and wallpaper perforator. These are particularly good when removing paper that has been painted.
- Trestles and scaffold boards can also be hired.

⚠ Safety tip

Do take care when erecting and using stepladders, ladders and scaffolds. Make sure they are firmly fixed.

Before you begin

Clear the room

Remove:

- Lightweight furniture
- Loose floor coverings
- Curtains and track
- Lampshades.

HOW TO: Prepare walls and ceilings

Before you begin (cont.)

Pile up heavy furniture in the centre of the room and cover it with dustsheets. Cover fitted carpets with heavy-duty polythene, taping the polythene down round the edges with wide Duck tape.

Isolate the electricity at the fuse box or consumer unit, then take down any wall lights and insulate the wiring (**fig. 1**).

Safety tip

Do take care when walking on polythene as it may become slippery.

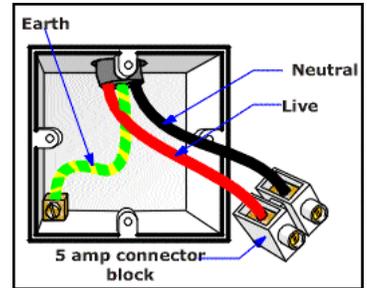


fig. 1

Ensure good light

Try to work in daylight or good artificial light. You can buy or hire portable halogen work lights, which cast a very good light.

Remove radiators

Decorating behind a radiator can be quite tricky and it's usually easier to remove the radiator. You won't have to drain down the whole system.

Tighten down the manual control valve until it's well seated, twisting the plastic cap by hand (**fig. 2**).

Remove the cap from the lockshield valve, then tighten down the spindle. Note how many turns this takes; later you'll need to open it by the same amount (**fig. 3**).

Roll back the carpet and place old towels around the pipe and a small bowl under the manual control valve.

Loosen the bleed valve with a radiator key. Hold the body of the manual control valve with an adjustable wrench to stop it twisting, whilst unscrewing the cap-nut that holds the valve onto the radiator using a second adjustable wrench. Dirty black water will come out of the radiator as the valve is loosened so be prepared with bowls and old towels. As the bowls fill tighten the nut, empty the bowls and recommence draining the radiator (**fig. 4**).

When the radiator is empty, undo the cap nut on the other valve. Carefully lift the radiator off its brackets and tip the remaining water into the bucket.

Replacing a radiator

Hang the radiator onto its brackets.

Tighten the cap nuts onto both valves.

Close the bleed valve and open both radiator valves, undoing the lockshield valve by the same number of turns used to close it.

Use the bleed valve to release any trapped air.

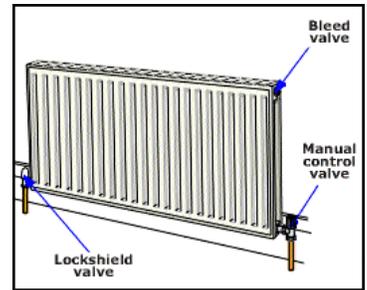


fig. 2

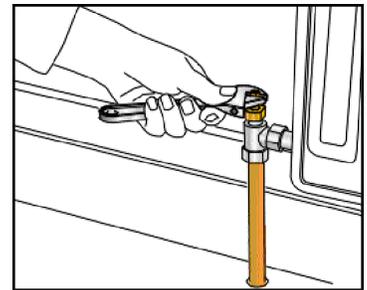


fig. 3

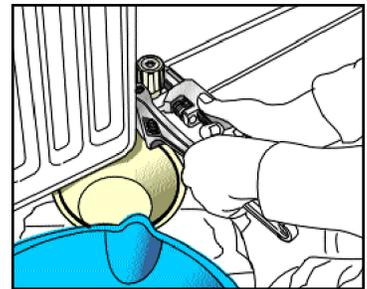


fig. 4

Removing old wallpaper

1. Score paper

Some papers, especially if they've been painted, may prove very stubborn. Use a wallpaper perforator to score the surface before soaking (**fig. 5**). Only use light pressure or the plaster will be damaged.

HOW TO: Prepare walls and ceilings

Removing old wallpaper (cont.)

2. Soak & strip paper

Use clean warm water with a little washing up liquid added to help the soaking process. To prevent the old paper drying out too quickly, work in an unheated room.

Apply the water with a brush or fine-mist garden spray. On ceilings work on 1 to 2m² at a time. On walls start from the bottom and work up, covering up to four widths of paper.

Apply the water several times until the paper begins to lift and bubble. Properly soaked paper will come off in large strips with the stripping knife (**fig. 6**). Soak stubborn patches again and then remove them. Be thorough and don't leave any bits of paper, however small.

After removing two sections of paper, soak the area beside the third and fourth sections to soften it while you remove the already softened sections.

Using a steam stripper

Using a steam wallpaper stripper is cleaner and quicker than hand soaking.

Hold the steamer against the paper at the bottom of the wall until that area is softened. Slide the steamer up the wall and hold it there while you remove the first area of paper with the stripping knife (**fig. 7**).

Safety tip

Take care if you're using a steam stripper on ceilings. It can spit out small globs of hot water. Hold the stripper in front of you and never directly overhead (**fig. 8**). Wear safety glasses or goggles, and long sleeves.

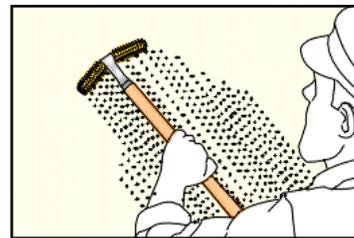


fig. 5

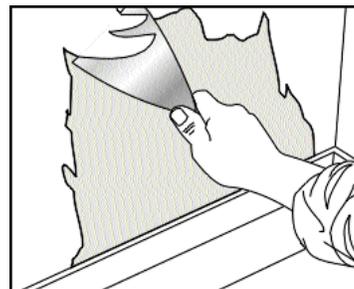


fig. 6

Removing vinyl wallcovering

Vinyl on plaster

Vinyl with no backing sticks directly onto the plaster and may be peeled off the wall. Use the stripping knife to lift a corner and pull. After you've removed the vinyl, wash the walls to remove all traces of vinyl adhesive.

Vinyl on paper backing

When removing vinyls with a paper backing, pull off the vinyl surface and then soak and strip the paper backing as described above.

Alternatively, if the wall is in sound condition with no obvious cracks, leave the backing and treat as a lining paper. See *How To: Paper walls*.

Filling cracks and chips

The secret of filling is to apply just the right amount of plaster to the area to be filled and only that area. The finish should be smooth and slightly proud (0.3mm) of the surrounding area.

Fine cracks

Check the crack for loose particles, then fill with ready-mixed, very fine filler.

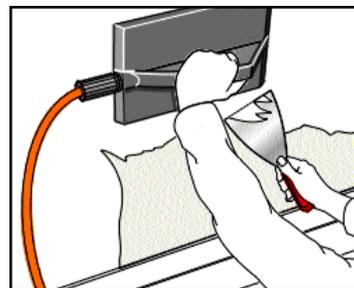


fig. 7



fig. 8

HOW TO: Prepare walls and ceilings

Removing vinyl wallcovering (cont.)

Force the filler into the crack with a filling knife, level it off and smooth into the surrounding surface with a damp, fine-textured sponge.

Small holes

Fill using a plasterer's small tool (leaf and square) (**fig. 9**).

Large cracks and holes

Use a good quality interior filler. This may be powder you mix with water or ready-mixed in tubes or tubs. First scrape out the crack with the filling knife and where possible undercut the edge (**fig. 10**).

Pick up some filler on a 200-300mm wide filling knife or plastering trowel. With the blade parallel to the crack, force in the filler leaving it slightly proud but smooth (**fig. 11**).

Large cracks may need at least two goes to fill them properly. Allow the first layer to dry out before applying subsequent ones. Very deep cracks may be partially filled with crunched up damp newspaper before filling.

Very large holes

Remove any loose plaster that moves and 'clicks' when you tap it. Fill the holes with patching plaster.

When the filler is completely dry, rub down the surface until it's flush with the surrounding area. Use a cork block and coarse glasspaper on flat surfaces, and hand-held glasspaper for mouldings and rounded corners. Sweep and vacuum the dust as you go.

Hint

Don't use an electric sander to rub down plasterwork.

If you intend to paint the walls, wash them down, fill any cracks then rub the whole wall down with 40 grit glasspaper wrapped round a cork block.

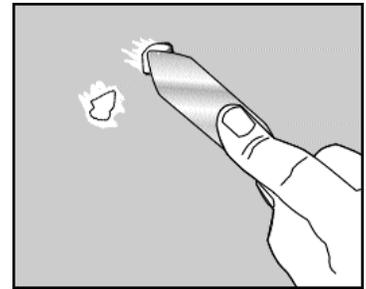


fig. 9

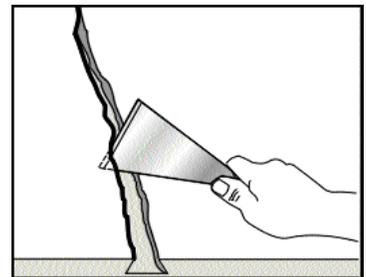


fig. 10

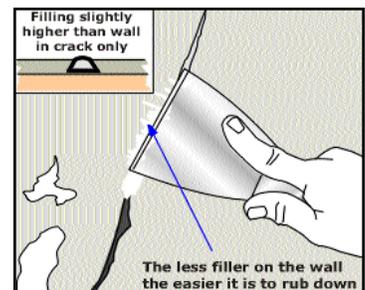


fig. 11

Preparing gloss painted walls

Applying size

Before hanging any paper, size the wall or ceiling. Brush the plasterwork free of dust. Then use a wide paste brush or paint roller to apply an even coat of the size.

The size is usually a thinned-down mixture of wallpaper adhesive, so the choice of size depends on the type of wall covering you intend to use. Follow the manufacturer's instructions. **HB**