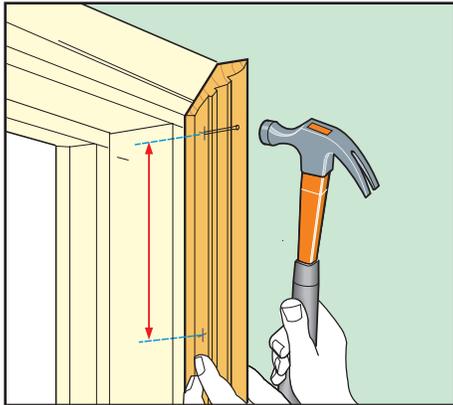


Introduction



In this 'How to' you'll learn about installing different types of mouldings: skirting boards, architraves, and dado and picture rails. You'll find advice on choosing mouldings and estimating quantities, and directions for decorating.

Removing old mouldings may be the most time-consuming part of the job. But it's well worth taking your time to work carefully and cause as little damage as possible to the wall surfaces.

What you'll need

Materials

- Mouldings
- Skirting boards
 - Architraves
 - Dado rails
 - Picture rails

Tools & equipment

- For removing existing mouldings
- Brick bolster
 - Old wood chisel
 - Pincers or claw hammer
 - Sharp utility knife
 - Small crowbar
 - Wood offcuts to protect wall surfaces

For fixing new mouldings

- Bench hook
- Coping saw
- Decorator's mastic
- Drill

- Filling knife
- Hammer
- Jigsaw with adjustable sole plate
- Masonry nails
- Mitre box
- Nail punch
- Pencil
- Screws and wallplugs
- Spirit level
- Steel tape measure
- Tenon saw
- Wood and masonry drill bits
- Wood filler
- Cable/pipe detector

About mouldings

'Architectural moulding' is a generic term for the decorative timber mouldings used to enhance the interiors of buildings. These include skirting boards, architraves round doors (and some window openings), dado rails and picture rails.

Figure 1 shows the effects you can achieve with mouldings. Mouldings were traditionally painted or wood-grained (finished to resemble an exotic hardwood, such as mahogany). You can of course stain mouldings if you want to enhance the natural look of their grain.

Select mouldings to match the style of the room where you intend to install them. The main living rooms and the hall traditionally had the most ornate mouldings. The landings and main bedrooms had something less ostentatious, while the rest of the house had a relatively plain design.

Types of mouldings

Different types of mouldings are available in a range of styles, from relatively plain to decidedly ornate.

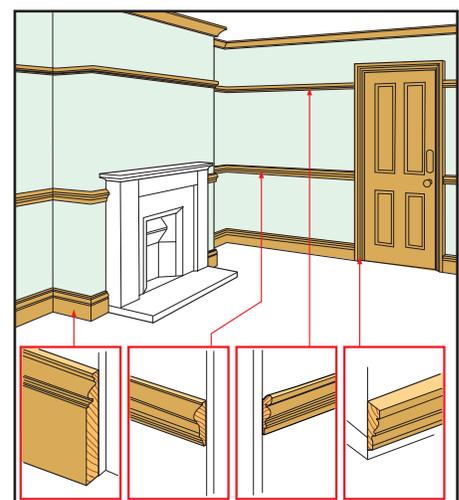


fig. 1

HOW TO: Use architectural mouldings

What you'll need (cont.)

- Skirting boards

Skirt the room at the base of the walls to protect the plaster from kicks and knocks. Existing boards are usually nailed directly to the masonry. In older properties they may be nailed to timber blocks called grounds, which are themselves nailed to the walls.

- Architraves

Cover the joint between a doorframe and the surrounding plaster. They may fit flush with the ends of skirting boards and have mitred top corners. Or they may be installed with decorative plinths and corner blocks. Architraves are sometimes fitted around sash windows, where the windows are flush with the inner face of the house wall.

- Dado rails

Fitted mainly in dining rooms, halls and landings to protect the wall surfaces from the backs of chairs. The wall surface between a dado rail and the skirting board was often panelled or decorated with a sturdy embossed wall covering, such as Lincrusta.

- Picture rails

Mouldings with a P-shaped profile, from which pictures can be hung using S-shaped picture hooks. They are usually fitted about 45cm below ceiling or cornice level.

How many lengths?

Measure the room dimensions carefully and take your measurements with you when you go shopping for mouldings.

For mouldings running right round the room, divide the room perimeter by the standard length of the moulding.

Round the answer up to the next whole number of lengths to allow for cutting corner joints.

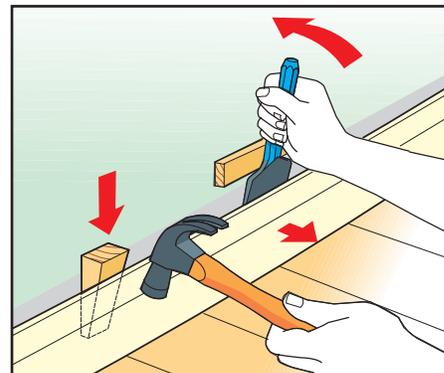


fig. 2

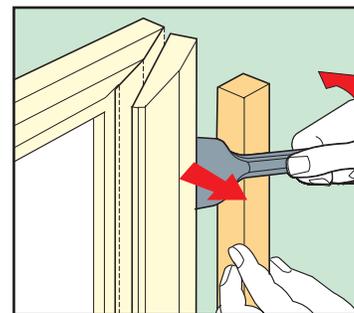


fig. 3

Before you begin

Check for cables

When fixing mouldings to your walls, remember that cables may be buried in the plaster. Cables to light switches invariably drop from the ceiling immediately above. Socket outlets may be fed from above or below.

Use a battery powered cable detector to check for cables before you start work. Mark the position of cables clearly on the walls before driving nails or drilling holes.

Acclimatise mouldings

Unwrap new mouldings and store them in the room where you intend to install them. This allows them to acclimatize to the house temperature and humidity.

Prime the back faces

Treat the back faces of the mouldings with wood primer or varnish before fixing them, especially if they're to go on external walls.

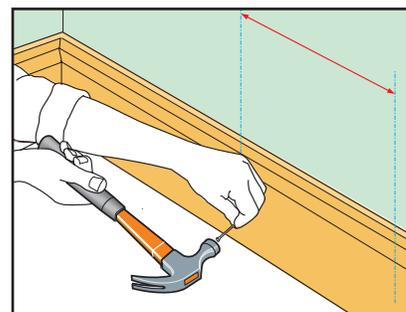


fig. 4

Removing existing mouldings

Skirting boards

First cut along the top edge with a knife to sever the bond to paint or wall coverings.

Gently prise the board away from the wall by driving the edge of your brick bolster down between board and wall. Use packing to protect the wall surface. Drive in wooden wedges as you work along the wall to hold each length away from the wall surface (**fig. 2**). When you have the board partly free, lever it off with your crowbar.

Architraves

Cut along both edges of each length to minimise damage to paintwork or wallpaper. Then use your old wood chisel to prise the architrave away from the doorframe (**fig. 3**). Lever it right off with your electrician's bolster, using packing to protect the wall.

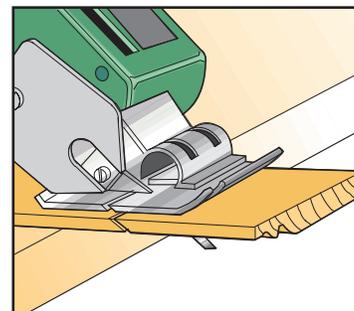


fig. 5

Installing new skirting boards

1. Skirt the first wall

Start work on the longest wall in the room.

Walls needing one length

Cut the board to the length required and fix it to the wall. Use screws and wallplugs on solid walls. Use oval wire nails on stud partition walls, or if the original skirting was nailed to timber, use fixing grounds. Countersink screw heads and punch nail heads in (**fig. 4**).

Walls needing two lengths

Cut a 45° mitre on the 'open' end of the first length so that it faces out into the room (**fig. 5**). Butt the square end into the corner and fix the length in place.

Take the second length and cut a 45° mitre facing the other way on one end. The mitred ends of the two boards should join precisely to prevent the joint opening up visibly if the timber shrinks.

Cut the second board square to length, so it runs into the next corner of the room. Spread the cut faces of the wood with adhesive then fix the board in place, aligning the mitre joint carefully (**fig. 6**).

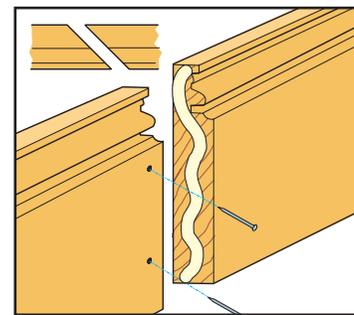


fig. 6

2. Skirt the other walls

For corners to fit neatly together take your second board and lay flat on the floor, profile side facing up. Stand an off-cut vertically on one end of the uncut board aligning top and bottom of each board, and draw round the profile using a pencil. Cut along the pencil line using a coping saw (**figs. 7, 8**).

Complete the second wall with a square ended board and scribe the end of the first length on the third wall as before. Carry on with this sequence to complete the fourth wall.

Dealing with external corners

At external corners, cut mitres then glue and pin the joint. This prevents the joint opening up if the wood shrinks.

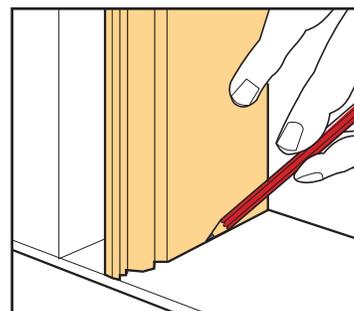


fig. 7

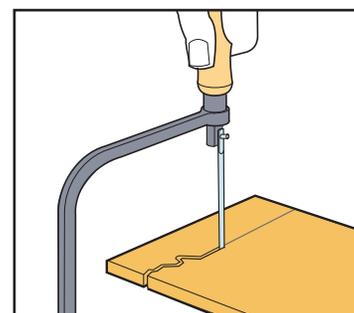


fig. 8

HOW TO: Use architectural mouldings

Installing new skirting boards (cont.)

3. Fill joints

Fill all the screw and nail heads, ready for decorating.

Use flexible decorators filler to seal the joint between the top edge of the skirting board and the wall. A hard filler will soon crack and fall out.

Installing new architraves

1. Fit uprights

Cut and fit the two uprights first. Hold the first length in place and mark on it the position of the inner end of the corner mitre. Cut the mitre and nail the length to the edge of the doorframe with oval wire nails. Repeat the process to cut and fit the other upright (**fig. 9**).

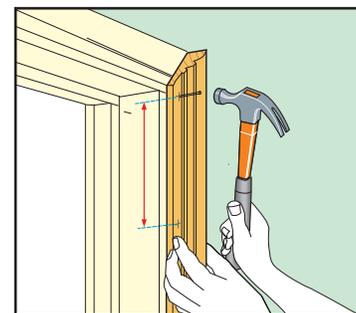


fig. 9

2. Fit top section

Rest a short length of the moulding upside-down on top of the uprights. Mark on the length the positions of the outer ends of the corner mitres. Cut the mitres, check the fit and nail the section to the doorframe (**fig. 10**).

Hint

Drive pins through the corners of the mitre joint from above and from the side. This prevents the joint opening up.

Installing dado and picture rails

1. Mark guidelines

Use a spirit level and a timber straightedge to draw a pencil guideline all round the room, at the level where you want to fix the rail.

2. Fit rails

Follow the instructions for skirting boards to fit successive lengths of moulding around the room. Scribe internal corners and mitre external ones. Use screws and wallplugs to fix the rails to masonry walls (**fig. 11**). Use nails on timber stud partition walls.

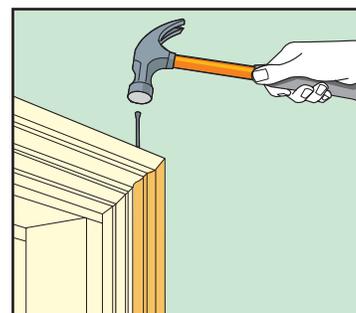


fig. 10

Decorating mouldings

Use filler suited to the type of wood finish you propose using, to fill nail, screw holes and corner joints. Use decorator's filler to hide any irregularities between the mouldings and the wall. Sand the filler flush with the surrounding wood before painting, varnishing or staining your mouldings to taste.

Hint

Use masking tape on the walls alongside your mouldings to give a neat paint line. Leave the tape until the paint is touch dry.

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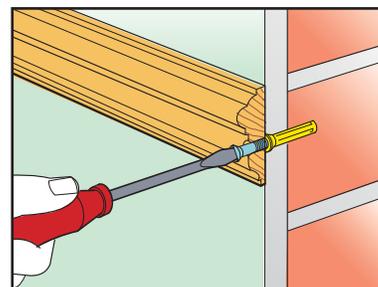


fig. 11