

Expert advice

DIY DILEMMAS

Big Strong Boys' Jake Robinson answers your DIY queries and this month provides a step-by-step guide to wallpapering



JAKE ROBINSON

WHAT'S THE SAFEST WAY TO HANG A CHANDELIER?

We want to put a chandelier in our dining room. We tried to fit one to the old light fitting but couldn't get a good fixing to hold its weight. Is there anything you can suggest?
Philippa Jones, Belfast

Jake says Your current light fitting is probably only attached to the plasterboard ceiling, rather than a joist, meaning it isn't strong enough to hold your chandelier. To create a stronger fixing, start by locating the joists in your ceiling, either by lifting the floor upstairs to access the space or by using a joist finder from a DIY store and marking their location on the ceiling. Next, chop around the area where the light will go. Get some timber and screw it from one joist to the next – this is what you'll attach the chandelier to. Once this is in place, drill a hole in the timber and bring the cable from your old fitting through it, making sure you turn the light fuse off at the fuse board first. Make good the affected ceiling area and once this is dry and painted, connect your chandelier and screw it to the timber, making sure it's firmly attached.

HOW CAN I GET RID OF INK MARKS ON MY PINE TABLE?

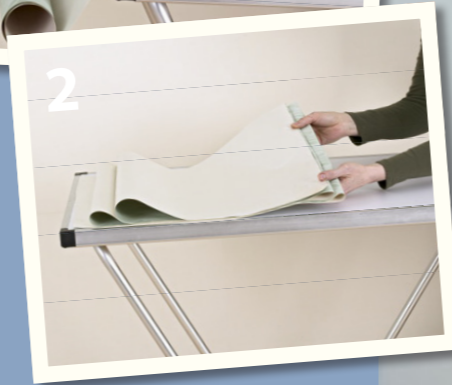
I have got a lovely old pine table in my kitchen, but my little boy found a marker pen and scribbled on it. I've tried various different sprays and white spirit but the ink has penetrated the wood. Is there an easy way to get it off?
Lucy Fitzpatrick, Hull

Jake says You need to sand the tabletop with an orbital sander. Start with coarse sanding sheets, making sure you go along the grain and not across it. Next, switch to a medium-grade sheet, then a fine one to finish. Ensure you sand evenly to avoid creating dips in the wood. Clear the dust using a damp rag and leave it to dry. There are various different waxes you can use to finish, such as Briwax or Liberon wax, available from DIY stores. Apply a couple of coats and buff the table to get the original finish or even better.

HELP ME REATTACH A RADIATOR TO THE WALL

My radiator is hanging off the wall after a friend heavily lent on it. Is there a way to fix it back to the wall without taking it off completely?
Marion James, Newcastle

Jake says Unfortunately not – you'll still have to take the radiator off the wall first. Shut off the valves and empty it of water. If the radiator has got a draining valve, you can easily bleed it but make sure the central heating is switched off first. If it hasn't got one of these, you'll have to drain all the radiators in your house. The draining valve for the lot should be on the last radiator in the system. Once the radiator has been bled, undo all the nuts and then reattach it to the wall securely, using appropriate fixings. Once this is done, you can undo the shut-off valve and refill the radiator with water, finally switching your central heating back on.



Jake's guide to... wallpapering

YOU WILL NEED

Pasting table, paste, paste brush, edge roller, smoothing brush, trimming knife, scissors, tape measure, pencil, sponge, long ruler, stepladder, bucket, spirit level and rolls of your chosen wallpaper.

STEP ONE MEASURING AND CUTTING

To calculate how many rolls of wallpaper you will need, measure the perimeter of the room or walls you want to cover and divide this figure by the width of the roll to make X. Next, divide the length of the roll by the distance between the skirting and ceiling + 11cm to make Y. Divide X by Y to give the number of rolls needed. Cut lengths of paper to the measurement of the drop. If you have a pattern to line up, unroll subsequent pieces next to the first, carefully aligning the pattern before cutting it to length.

STEP TWO PREPARATION

Check for any loose plaster by tapping the wall and use filler where necessary. When ready, seal the wall with a diluted solution of wallpaper paste.

STEP THREE PASTING

Make sure you mix up enough paste to do one wall at a time. Place the first length of paper along the pasting table and brush

on the paste diagonally outwards from the centre to the edge (fig. 1). Pull the paper towards you as you work and line it up with the table edge to avoid a messy surface. Continue to paste two more lengths of paper to allow time for the first piece to absorb some of the paste. Fold the pasted sides inwards to ensure the face side is kept clean and dry (fig. 2).

STEP FOUR HANGING

It's usually best to start papering in an inconspicuous corner of the room as you may not be able to align the final paper exactly. Remember that walls may not be true, so use a spirit level to mark a vertical line from ceiling to floor as your starting point. Next, press the top of the first length of paper against the wall with a small overlap on the ceiling and slide the paper along until the outer edge is lined up with your vertical starting line (fig. 3). Then gently unfold the length and press against the wall (fig. 4), using the smoothing brush to get rid of any air bubbles or creases. Fold the paper at the ceiling and skirting to make a crease, then trim the overlapping edges. Use the edge roller to press down the edges of the paper. Continue to work your way along the wall, wiping off any spilt paste with a damp sponge as you go.

Above Hanging wallpaper with a horizontal-stripe design can make a room look wider

STEP FIVE TRIMMING

Follow these rules when trimming for a really professional finish:

■ **Around windows** Lightly hang the paper down over the frame and mark the position of its corners. Cut from the waste area of the paper in towards the corners (fig. 5). Smooth the paper against the wall and into the edges of the frame. Mark and trim in the normal way.

■ **Around sockets and light switches** Turn off the power supply to light switches and sockets before papering around them. Loosen the screws for the switch plate and hang the wallpaper carefully over it in the usual way. Press the paper lightly and mark the corners of the switch plate. Cut the paper from the centre outwards then ease it back to the wall. You'll have four triangles of paper pointing out towards you; trim these back a little, then pull the switch cover away and brush them behind it. Reposition the plate and gently tighten the screws; wait until the paper has fully dried to secure them firmly.

■ **At corners** You need to measure the horizontal distance from your last strip of wallpaper to the corner and

cut your next piece an inch wider. Press the paper into the corner carefully with the edge of the smoothing brush, making sure you don't tear it. Hang the next piece to overlap the previous one, making sure it is vertical, and smooth the overlap with the edge roller. For a professional finish, carefully slice through both thicknesses of paper at the seam of the overlap and remove the excess strips of paper so you end up with a precise butt joint. You should use the same double-cutting method for outside corners to keep your wallpaper plumb.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Never mix old and new paste and always check the instructions for the correct dilution.
- Always order wallpaper from the same batch to ensure colour continuity and order one or two extra rolls in case of any accidents.



Send in your DIY queries to

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