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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Drywall & Cement Board Basics

What is drywall?

Drywall – also known as gypsum board or wallboard – is a naturally fire-resistant, paper-covered sheet of natural or synthetic gypsum used to build interior walls and ceilings in most homes.

While all gypsum-based drywall is naturally fire-resistant, [PURPLE® drywall is unique](#) because it also resists moisture, mold and mildew. In addition, most PURPLE® drywall products also stand up to scratches, scuffs, dents and sound.

What’s the difference between drywall and cement board?

Drywall is used to create the walls and ceilings in the non-wet areas of your home. While standard drywall is likely appropriate for low-activity, low-moisture spaces, [PURPLE® drywall offers added benefits](#) for areas that need it – for example, mold and moisture resistance in the bathroom or basement, sound resistance in the bedroom or nursery, or protection against car door dings and accidental holes in the garage.

Cement board – also known as backerboard – is specially designed for use in place of drywall behind tile in the wet areas in bathrooms and kitchens. It’s hard, durable, naturally moisture- and mold-resistant, and won’t rot, disintegrate or swell when exposed to water. [PermaBase PLUS® Cement Board](#) is ideal for use behind tile in showers, tubs, backsplashes and countertops, and behind exterior finishes such as thin brick, stucco and manufactured stone.

Isn’t all drywall the same?

No. While all drywall is naturally fire-resistant, [PURPLE® drywall is unique](#) because it also resists moisture, mold and mildew. Most PURPLE® drywall products also stand up to scratches, scuffs, dents and sound. This means added value and peace of mind regardless of steamy showers, roughhousing kids or band practice.

All PURPLE® products have achieved [GREENGUARD GOLD Certification for indoor air quality](#) and are as easy to install and finish as standard drywall.



About PURPLE®

What is PURPLE® drywall used for?

PURPLE® drywall stands up to what standard drywall can't, including moisture, mold, mildew, scratches, scuffs, dents and sound. These [added benefits](#) – for example, mold and moisture resistance in the bathroom or basement, sound resistance in the bedroom or nursery, or protection against car door dings and accidental holes in the garage – give homeowners greater value and extra peace of mind.

What's more, all PURPLE® products are naturally fire-resistant, have achieved [GREENGUARD GOLD Certification for indoor air quality](#) and are as easy to install and finish as standard drywall.

Who makes PURPLE® products, and how long have they been around?

[National Gypsum](#) has been making PURPLE® products for more than a decade.

Headquartered in Charlotte, N.C., National Gypsum is one of the largest gypsum drywall manufacturers in the country. The company owns and operates a network of drywall, joint compound and cement board plants across the United States and Canada.

How much does PURPLE® drywall cost?

It would cost less than \$1,500 to upgrade an average 2,500-square-foot house to PURPLE® drywall where recommended.

For a standard size room (approximately 12' x 16' x 8') including the ceiling, the average difference in cost to upgrade to PURPLE® products is:

- \$100 or less for XP® drywall
- \$200 or less for Hi-Abuse® XP® or Hi-Impact® XP® drywall
- \$900 or less for SoundBreak® XP® drywall

Prices vary by region. Check with your [local home improvement store](#) or contractor for prices and availability near you.

What's the difference between PURPLE® drywall and green drywall?

Green drywall (also known as greenboard) is only moisture-resistant. PURPLE® drywall, only made by National Gypsum, is superior because it offers moisture, mold and mildew resistance.

In addition, many PURPLE® drywall products offer [added benefits](#), including resistance to scratches, scuffs, dents and sound.

What makes PURPLE® drywall resistant to moisture, mold and mildew?

PURPLE® drywall is made of a specially treated, moisture- and fire-resistant gypsum core. That core is sandwiched between heavy, moisture-, mold- and mildew-resistant, 100 percent recycled paper that's purple on the front and gray on the back.



How does SoundBreak® XP® Drywall soundproof a room?

While there's no such thing as completely soundproof drywall, [SoundBreak® XP® Drywall](#) can drastically reduce the amount of noise you hear between rooms from music, television, conversation, a baby crying or dogs barking.

At the center of SoundBreak® XP® is a layer of material specifically designed to absorb and dissipate noise. That material, called a polymer, is sandwiched between two pieces of high-density, mold-resistant drywall and covered by heavy, moisture-, mold- and mildew-resistant, 100 percent recycled purple paper on both sides.

Want to hear the difference? [Check out our SoundBreak® XP® demo.](#)

What makes Hi-Abuse® XP® Drywall resistant to scratches and scuffs?

[Hi-Abuse® XP® Drywall](#) features a heavy, abrasion-resistant face paper and a specially formulated core to provide greater resistance to surface abuse, such as scuffs from shoes and backpacks in the mud room or scrapes from carrying heavy luggage up and down a stairwell.

What makes Hi-Impact® XP® Drywall resistant to accidental holes?

[Hi-Impact® XP® Drywall](#) features all of the benefits of [Hi-Abuse® XP® Drywall](#) plus a fiberglass mesh embedded into the back of the board to prevent accidental holes from car doors or bike handles in the garage or a hole from a doorknob or pool cue in a playroom.

What makes PURPLE® drywall naturally fire-resistant?

Gypsum itself is naturally fire-resistant. Gypsum drywall is made by sandwiching a core of wet plaster between two sheets of paper. When the core sets and dries, the sandwich becomes a strong, rigid, fire-resistant building material. It's resistant to fire because in its natural state, gypsum contains water; and when exposed to heat or flame, this water is released as steam, which delays heat transfer.

Will PURPLE® drywall show through a coat of white paint?

No. PURPLE® drywall installs, finishes and decorates like standard drywall.

What does GREENGUARD Certification mean?

This is the highest standard for indoor air quality. To achieve it, National Gypsum's products have passed rigorous third-party sample testing and review of manufacturing processes with strict standards set by [GREENGUARD Certification](#), part of UL Environment. GREENGUARD certifies products and materials for low chemical emissions and provides a resource for choosing healthier products and materials for indoor environments. All certified products must meet stringent chemical emissions standards based on established criteria from key public health agencies.



Installing & Finishing Drywall

Can I install and finish drywall myself or should I hire someone to do it?

You can do either. With the right tools, precision and patience, cutting and hanging drywall is definitely doable for a do-it-yourselfer. Taping and finishing are the tricky parts. Some people hang the panels themselves or with the help of a friend, and then hire someone to finish the job.

Visit our [Installation Tips](#) page for step-by-step instructions available both as videos and printable PDFs.

How do I decide what kind of drywall I need in my house?

Your drywall needs likely differ from room to room.

For example, while standard drywall is likely appropriate for a low-traffic, low-activity area like a dining room, [XP® Drywall](#) is a better choice for areas prone to moisture such as bathrooms and basements. Use [SoundBreak® XP® Drywall](#) in rooms where sound traveling in or out is a concern, and [Hi-Abuse® XP® Drywall](#) and [Hi-Impact® XP® Drywall](#) in busy or rough-and-tumble areas like mud rooms and playrooms or high-traffic areas like hallways and stairwells.

Check out our [Projects](#) pages for more specific recommendations on the best PURPLE® products for each room, or ask your contractor or [local home improvement store](#).

What tools do I need to install and finish my own drywall?

Our [Materials Calculator](#) will tell you not only how much drywall you need, but other tools and supplies to have on hand as well, such as nails, screws, joint compound, drywall tape, sandpaper and knives.

How do I install and finish drywall?

This process involves measuring, cutting, hanging, taping the seams, applying three coats of joint compound (also called mud), installing corner bead and trim, and then priming your new drywall surfaces for painting.

Visit our [Installation Tips](#) page for step-by-step instructions available both as videos and printable PDFs.

When hanging PURPLE® drywall, which side faces out?

Always hang PURPLE® drywall with the purple side out, or facing into the room. It decorates like standard drywall, which means the purple won't be visible under white or lightly colored paint.

How do I cut drywall?

Set your sheets of drywall upright with the smooth side out. Put your T-square on the top edge on one sheet and line it up with your measurement. Score your cut by running a utility knife along the side of the "T." Snap the sheet back to break the sheet along the cut. Use a utility knife to cut the paper back. To cut around obstacles, use a drywall saw like you would any hand saw. Cut around electrical boxes with a keyhole saw. Punch the tip of the saw through the drywall and cut along each side. A power jigsaw also will work.



Watch our drywall installation how-to videos:

[Cutting & Scoring the Board](#)

[Cutting for an Electrical Box](#)

What’s the difference between using nails or screws to install drywall?

Nails require only a hammer and cost less than screws. Screws need power tools, but you use fewer of them and they hold more securely. Screws provide a cleaner look, are easier to countersink and hide with joint compound, remove more easily and don’t require pounding, which can take its toll on the structural integrity of the wall.

How many coats of joint compound does it take to finish drywall?

Three. First, a bed coat to cover the seams between panels of drywall, fill in “dimples” from fasteners such as nails or screws and hold drywall tape; then a block coat to spread on top of drywall tape to seal it in place; and finally a finish coat to make your new walls and ceilings look as smooth and even as possible.

Watch our drywall installation how-to videos:

[Mixing & Applying Joint Compound](#)

[Applying the Second Coat of Joint Compound](#)

[Applying the Final Coat of Joint Compound](#)

What do I do if a nail head “pops” through the surface of the drywall?

Drive a new nail 1.5” above the popped nail into the stud – indent the face paper without tearing (called “dimpling”). Drive and “dimple” the popped nail. Cover with a thin, uniform layer of joint compound and let it dry for 24 hours.

Can I use drywall on my ceilings?

Yes. Use either 1/2” or 5/8” thick panels. Run the long length of the drywall panels perpendicular to your framing.

Watch our drywall installation how-to videos:

[How to Hang Ceilings](#)

[Securing the Ceiling with Fasteners](#)

What’s the best way to install drywall around windows or light switches?

To cut around such obstacles, use a drywall saw like you would any hand saw. Always use proper electrical safety precautions when working around wiring.

Watch our drywall installation how-to video:

[Cutting for an Electrical Box](#)



What's the best drywall for showers?

Instead of drywall, use [PermaBase PLUS® Cement Board](#) behind tile in showers and tubs. Because it's specially designed for the wet areas in bathrooms and kitchens, it's hard, durable, naturally moisture- and mold-resistant, and won't rot, disintegrate or swell when exposed to water.

What kind of drywall should I use under kitchen or bathroom tile?

Use [PermaBase PLUS® Cement Board](#) instead of drywall under tile in the kitchen or bathroom. It's hard, durable, naturally moisture- and mold-resistant, and won't rot, disintegrate or swell when exposed to water, making it ideal for use behind ceramic tile, backsplashes and countertops.