

Choose wallpaper that's easy to install

(AP) - If you can survive scanning endless pages of wallpaper books and find a pattern that suits your decor, color scheme and budget, hanging the wallpaper will come easy.

For your first job, choose a wallpaper that is easy to install, such as an inexpensive (less than \$20 a roll) pre-trimmed vinyl paper. Vinyl wallcoverings come paper-backed and fabric-

backed, and both go up nicely. These papers don't stretch out of shape, even if you reposition them several times on the wall. Fabric-backed papers are more expensive and well suited for bathrooms or kitchens, where humidity can be a problem. Fabric-backed vinyls can be scrubbed and easily stripped off walls at a later date.

You can choose between pre-pasted

wallpaper and those requiring adhesive. Pre-pasted paper only needs to be dunked or soaked in warm water to activate the paste impregnated in its back. Other wallcoverings are hung on the wall with an adhesive applied with a roller. If you use one of these papers, ask your wallpaper dealer for an appropriate adhesive.

Look for paper with a pattern

repeat or drop of 10 inches or less. Pattern drop or repeat refers to a pattern's length (a repeat or drop of 10 inches is a pattern that repeats itself every 10 inches). The larger the drop, the more paper is wasted getting the pattern to align between the pieces.

By choosing a pattern with a small repeat for your first project, you can avoid excessive waste.

Armchair decorators add orders to their lives

BY BARBARA MAYER
AP SPECIAL FEATURES

The bed sheets were on sale, they were tempting, and the catalog would accept returns. So Stanley Hura ordered them.

That was more than 20 years ago, and Hura, a New York interior decorator, has shopped by mail ever since, even though he could buy bed linens and most other furnishings within minutes of home.

"But it was so easy," says Hura, who through the years has ordered, among other things, kitchen gadgets, appliances, towels, even furniture.

Spiegel and J.C. Penney still issue their big books, but Sears Roebuck & Co., the grand-daddy of mail order, dropped its general merchandise catalog in 1993 in favor of smaller specialty catalogs including one for home fur-

nishings.

Direct Marketing Association, a trade group in New York, says that of 10,000 catalogs published, at least 700 are related to home decorating.

"The number would be much larger if home remodeling and home building were taken into account," Chet Dalzell, DMA spokesman, says.

According to the Simmons Market Research Bureau of New York, in 1994 there were 25.4 million mail-order transactions for curtains, bedspreads and linens; furniture, cookware and kitchen items; stereo equipment, small appliances and gardening items. The figures compare with 23.3 million in 1990.

Of the home furnishings bought by mail, home accessories seem to dominate, perhaps because no exact mea-

surements are required and the selection is wide.

Gail Green, a decorator in New York, relies on catalogs for small mirrors, area rugs, lamps and accessories that she mixes with antiques.

"Nobody is going to know the difference between expensive antiques and modestly-priced adaptations when they are displayed together in an attractive mix," Green says.

"In fact, it is more effective to have a mix. Everything doesn't have to be a star. There can be supportive accessories."

Despite the obvious pleasures of catalog shopping, there are issues to consider before picking up the telephone.

For Hura, the major issue is "if the color reproduction in the book is differ-

ent from reality."

Another issue is with returns. Repacking, particularly bulky items, can be a problem. Then, too, items shipped unassembled have to be assembled. And for those that have to be measured, such as window shades and blinds, there's the potential for costly buyer error.

Measuring for window treatments is, indeed, an aspect of mail order that customers don't like. Another is selecting fabrics, according to Irene Wilson, vice president of the Spiegel catalog in Downers Grove, Ill.

To at least partially address these concerns, some mail-order houses include detailed measuring guides in their catalogs and offer fabric swatches for free or for a nominal fee deducted from future orders.

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