

Starch Just Isn't for Shirts!

The walls in any room of your home are a blank canvas just waiting for your creative touch. But what avenue do you take? Painting? Wallpapering? Stenciling? Although these are wonderful wall decorating methods, they are not always the most practical option—especially for those who live in apartments, military housing, or for those that love to redecorate constantly. It's too permanent. You'll have to repaint in most situations, so why go to this double work?

I have an answer to this decorating dilemma in only three words “liquid fabric starch!” Now I know what you are thinking: what does fabric starch have to do with decorating walls? This is one of my favorite methods for a wall treatment. It's easy to do, doesn't take too long to accomplish, and, depending on the fabric choice, it doesn't cost too much. This is my kind of decorating!” When it's time for a change, the fabric is easily removed with no wall damage. And, when you get to your new home, the same fabric can go right back up on the walls—or it can be used for other decorating projects. What a concept: recycling wall treatments. You can't do that with wallpaper!

The starching technique can be used on both walls and furniture. The starch acts as an adhesive for the fabric to adhere to the surface. Entire rooms or just a focal wall can be adorned with this method. Or, opt for the fabric to be used only on the bottom or top half of the wall and combine it with another finish.



Using fabric instead of wallpaper on walls is an interesting and budget-friendly way to add color and pattern to a room. It's also recyclable!



Materials Needed

- decorator fabric
- measuring tape
- liquid fabric starch (available in the laundry section of your grocery store)
- metal straight edge
- large container for starch
- string, plumb line, plumb bob, and chalk
- plastic sheets or drop cloth (to protect the floor and surrounding areas)
- wide paint brush
- sharp utility knife

Directions:

1. Clean the walls with a mild detergent; allow to dry.
2. "Plumb" the wall as if you were applying wallpaper. If you are doing an entire room, position the plumb line about 2 to 4 inches in from the corner. Regardless where the plumb line is it will act as a guideline so the fabric panels will hang perfectly straight.
3. Measure the wall you want to cover from top to bottom and corner to corner to help determine the amount of fabric you will need. Decorator fabric is usually 54 inches wide; quilt fabric is usually 42 inches wide. Plan on matching the pattern repeats. Note: 54-inch fabric will match exactly at the seams whereas quilt fabric will not match without a lot of waste.
4. Cut the fabric into lengths that are the top-to-bottom measurement plus 6 inches to allow for adjustments you may have to make to have the pattern straight. After the first length of fabric is cut, use this panel as a guide and cut subsequent panels exactly the same; match the pattern design along both selvages.
5. Apply a generous coat of starch to the wall surface with the paintbrush. Also apply a thin coat to the wrong side of the fabric.
6. Begin applying the fabric to the wall. Align one edge of the fabric with the plumb line and allow 3 inches to extend beyond the top and bottom. If you are covering more than one wall, place the first fabric panel so it wraps into the starting corner for 2 to 4 inches. Smooth the fabric with the palm of your hands, being sure not to stretch the fabric. Apply additional starch to the wall and/or fabric as needed. Should bubbles occur, prick them with a pin and smooth the fabric against the wall.



7. Continue adding fabric panels; match the design motifs in the fabric at the “seams” by overlapping the fabric edges as needed.
8. Once all fabric has been applied to the wall and dried (usually overnight), trim the fabric evenly along the top and bottom edges with a very sharp utility knife and a straight edge. Also trim away the overlap as follows: Hold the straight edge vertically against the wall and with a utility knife, slash through both layers. Remove the fabric strip from the overlapping edge. Then remove the underlapping strip by pulling back the fabric gently. Rearrange so fabric butts together and reseal by applying starch to a seam.



To apply fabric to a piece of furniture, cut fabric slightly larger than the area to be covered. Apply starch to surface, and then add fabric, topping it off with another coat of starch. For drawer fronts, cut a piece of fabric slightly larger than the area to be covered. Apply fabric as described. Allow to dry before trimming the excess fabric away. Use scissors or utility knife, depending on the shape of the drawer front.