

# Murphy Paneling

## HOW TO INSTALL WALL PANELS

Step by Step



MURPHY

Plywood  
Medium Density Fiberboard (MDF)

*This instruction sheet describes the proper methods for installing Murphy decorative wall paneling. This paneling is intended for dry interior use only and requires care in handling.*

There is nothing quite like the warmth and beauty of Murphy wall paneling. Appropriate in every setting and harmonious with either traditional or contemporary decor, prefinished paneling has an appeal no other wall covering can match. When you choose Murphy paneling, you can be assured you've made a wise choice. Murphy prefinished paneling is suitable for normal dry interior use environments. Murphy prefinished paneling should not be used in environments where accumulation of grease, smoke, or other surface contaminants will require frequent cleaning to remove accumulations.

### PLYWOOD

Timber Ridge®, Bedford Village®, McKenzie®, High Ridge®, Estate®, Wainscot Paneling

### MEDIUM DENSITY FIBERBOARD (MDF)

Western Vista®, StyleLine®

*\*MDF is an engineered wood product. Moisture and high humidity can adversely affect the product. Do not install in rooms with high humidity such as bathrooms, carports, garages, and other unheated rooms. Do not install on ceilings. 1/8" MDF wall paneling should not be installed over masonry and should always be installed over a solid noncombustible backing such as gypsum board. Do not use 1/8" MDF below ground level. To panel over masonry, you should use 1/4" plywood wall paneling over a lightweight wood frame or stud wall. DO NOT USE IN MANUFACTURED HOMES.*

## 1. Conditioning Panels

Condition panels by placing them in the room to be paneled 48 hours prior to installation. Stack the panels on the floor or lean them against a wall, with spacers between each sheet. This allows the room air to circulate around each panel for proper acclimation.

**All prefinished interior wall paneling is not waterproof and should not be stored or installed in areas subject to moisture or high humid**

## 2. Wall Preparation

### • PLYWOOD AND MDF

Installing paneling over existing true walls requires no preliminary preparation. Sanding high spots on the wall is generally about all you have to do. In most homes, studs are spaced 16" on center, but 24" centers and other spacing may exist especially in exterior walls. Stud spacing must be determined, since paneling must be nailed through the backing into studs or furring 16" on center for maximum holding. Measure stud centers and snap vertical chalk lines along the wall for each stud.

If studs are over 16" on center, install horizontal furring 16" on center following recommendations in section 8. If you're paneling over a new wall, check your local building codes to see if you're allowed to install paneling 1/4" and thicker directly to studs without a backing. Paneling thinner than 1/4" will require installation of a noncombustible backer over the studs. Exterior walls must be insulated and have a 4 mil or greater vapor retarder installed on the living side of the wall prior to panel installation. 1/8" Western Vista® and StyleLine® wall paneling should always be installed over a solid noncombustible backing such as gypsum wallboard.

## Arrange Panels

If you have chosen real wood veneer or simulated wood grain panels, take a few minutes to stand the panels side-by-side around the room. Arrange them to achieve the most pleasing balance of color and grain pattern, then number the back of each panel in sequence.

## 3. Cutting Panels

### • PLYWOOD, PANELBOARD, MDF AND HARDBOARD

If measured floor-to-ceiling height is 8' or less, subtract 1/2" from this measurement to allow 1/4" expansion clearance top and bottom. Transfer these measurements to panels for cutting. If using a handsaw or table saw, mark and cut the panels face up. If using a portable circular saw or sabre saw, mark and cut panels face down. Cut-outs for door and window sections, electrical switches and outlets or heat registers require careful measurements. Many a good paneling job has been ruined by inaccurate cutting for outlet boxes or heat registers. One method is to mark the outlet box with chalk. Then, place the properly cut panel on the wall and tap at the outlet location. This will transfer an image to the back of the panel and indicate the area for cutting. A 1/4" gap around this area will provide room for spacing and adjustment – the faceplate will cover up the extra space. On an existing wall, adjust the outlet box to meet panel thickness. Unscrew at the top and bottom, wedge a small paneling scrap at screw locations, and tighten.

## 4. Spacing Between Panels

### • MDF

A 1/16" gap between adjacent panels is recommended to allow for expansion. Never butt panels tightly. A 3/16" space should be provided around windows and doors.

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## 5. Fitting Panels

### • PLYWOOD AND MDF

Put the first panel in place and bring to adjacent wall in the corner allowing 1/16" space. Make sure it is plumb and both left and right panel edges fall on solid stud backing. The panel may have to be trimmed to allow the outer edge to fall on the center of a stud for nailing. Also, on rough walls, or adjoining a fireplace wall, use a pencil compass to mark the panel on the inner edge, then cut on the scribe line to fit around the obstruction. Before nailing the paneling, paint a stripe of color to match the paneling groove color on the wall location where the panels will meet.

## 6. Adhesive Application

Adhesive application may be used to apply Plywood and 1/8" MDF which requires both adhesive and nails.

### • PLYWOOD 1/4" OR THICKER

Adhesive may be used to apply paneling directly to studs or over existing walls as long as the surface is level, sound and clean. Once the panel is fitted, apply beads of adhesive with a caulking gun in a continuous strip along the top, bottom and both sides of the panel. On intermediate studs, apply beads 3" long and 6" apart. Over solid backing, apply adhesive in a zigzag pattern between studs. Some supplemental nailing will be necessary to hold the panel in place until the adhesive sets. Be sure to read the adhesive manufacturer's instructions carefully prior to installation, as instructions may vary. Use a hammer and padded wood block (or rubber mallet) to set the glued panel in position.

\* Use only a latex water based adhesive with MDF Paneling. Solvent based adhesive may cause discoloration of finishes on MDF paneling.

## 7. Nailing Panels

### • PLYWOOD AND MDF

Panel grooves are usually located every 16", allowing nails to be placed in the grooves on standard 16" stud centers. Panel matching colored ringshank nails are recommended. Use 1" nails to apply paneling to studs alone, 11/2" nails to apply paneling through a solid backing or plaster. Space nails 6" along panel edges and 8" on intermediate studs. Wear eye protection when nailing.

### • MDF

**MDF panels must be installed using both a good quality panel adhesive and nails.** Make sure the surfaces of the studs or the existing walls are sound and clean. Once the panel is

fitted, apply adhesive with a caulking gun in a continuous strip along the top, bottom and both edges of the panel. When applying directly to studs (1/4" paneling only), apply beads of adhesive along the entire length of the intermediate studs. For installation over existing walls or gypsum wallboard, generously apply beads of adhesive to the panel in a zigzag pattern between studs from top to bottom. Be sure to read the adhesive manufacturer's instructions prior to installation. Use a hammer and padded wood block (or rubber mallet) to set the glued panel in position. Nail panels using color-matched ringshank paneling nails. Nails should penetrate the studs at least 3/4". Space the nails 6" along the panel edges and 12" on the intermediate studs. Wear eye protection when nailing. Nails should not be less than 1/4" from the panel edge. Start nailing in the center of the panel and work to the outer edges, or nail from one side to the other.

## 8. Installing Paneling over Masonry

The construction of a lightweight wood frame system – furring strips – will allow paneling to be applied to masonry walls (concrete, brick and cinder block) or walls in bad repair. Furring strips are 1" x 2" lumber or 1/2" plywood cut into strips 1-1/2" wide. Strips should run horizontally 16" apart (based on 8' ceiling) with vertical members spaced 48" on center where panels meet.

Note: Not all paneling is approved for below-grade use or over masonry walls; read these instructions carefully, or consult the instructions printed on the back of each panel to determine suitability for this application.

Note: If installing 1/8" MDF, a solid noncombustible backing such as gypsum wallboard must be placed over the furring strips before application of the panels.

Note: To panel over masonry or below grade, use minimum plywood wall paneling over a lightweight wood frame or a stud wall. 1/8" MDF wall paneling cannot be installed over masonry. 1/4" plywood paneling can be applied direct to furring, other thinner panels must be applied over noncombustible backing. Allow 1/2" space at the floor and ceiling with the horizontal strips.

Check with a level to make sure each furring strip is flush with the first strip. Use wood shingles or wedges between the wall and strips to assure a uniformly flat surface. Furring strips may be applied to a masonry wall with specially hardened masonry nails. A badly damaged masonry wall may require the construction of 2" x 3" stud wall, with 16" stud centers, before applying paneling. Excessive moisture conditions and high humidity will require correction prior to paneling installation.

Masonry walls partially or fully below ground level (below grade) may present a serious dampness problem. Exterior walls must be insulated and have a 4 mil or greater vapor retarder. Holes or cracks in masonry walls must be patched with concrete patching compound and weeping or porous walls must be waterproofed before installing paneling. In either case, consult the masonry product manufacturer for specific application instructions.

## 9. Wainscot Application

For a unique look use wainscoting to combine paneling types. Wood grain panels work effectively as wainscoting for decorative

paneling. An eight-foot wood grain panel cut into thirds will wainscot a 12' wall to a height of 32". Apply wainscoting along lower wall by following instructions for paneling installation. Repeat same steps with the upper wall. Hide the horizontal seam with a chair rail molding.

## 10. Paneling Maintenance

Murphy prefinished paneling is suitable for normal dry interior use environments. Murphy prefinished paneling should not be used in environments where accumulation of grease, smoke, or other contaminants will require frequent cleaning to remove accumulations. To remove surface accumulations such as dust, wipe with a soft cloth dampened with a furniture polish containing no waxes or silicones. More stubborn accumulations may require wiping with a soft cloth dampened with a solution of lukewarm water and a mild liquid detergent. Wipe dry immediately following this procedure with a clean dry cloth. Never use abrasive cleansers on paneling as it will scratch the finish and dull the panel gloss. Self-adhering tapes may contain solvents in their adhesives.

Applying to paneling may dissolve the protective coating and damage the panel.

### Tools and Supplies for Installation

Assemble all your tools and supplies before you begin the job. Here is what you will need for most common wall paneling installations:

- tape measure
- chalkline
- level
- drill
- pencil compass
- adhesive caulking gun
- hammer and nail set
- eye goggles
- padded wooden block must be worn when (or rubber mallet) using any power
- power or handsaw or hand tools (with short fine-toothed blade)
- keyhole saw
- carpenter's square
- mitre box

### HOW MUCH DO YOU NEED?

#### ESTIMATING GUIDE

*Murphy decorative panels measure 48" x 96" and pre-cut wainscot panels measure 48" x 32". This estimating guide will help determine the number of panels you'll need, whether you're working with full-size panels or wainscot panels.*

1. Measure the perimeter of the room you'd like to panel. Write down measurement in inches.

$$\text{Length} \quad + \quad \text{Width} \quad \times 2 \\ = \quad \text{Perimeter}$$

2. Divide that number by 48".

$$\text{Perimeter} \div 48 =$$

3. To allow for cutting waste, multiply that number by five percent.

$$\times 0.05 =$$

4. Add these two numbers together (2 & 3).

$$\text{This is the total number of panels needed.} \\ + \quad = \quad \text{Total} \\ \text{number of panels}$$

Note: When using cleaning materials, experiment with scrap paneling or spot clean in an inconspicuous area. Murphy is not responsible for any damage caused by such cleaning methods.

Usually 1/4" PLYWOOD wall paneling may be installed directly over studs alone, while thinner panels should be installed over a noncombustible backing such as gypsum wallboard. Consult your local building codes for approved application. Be sure to read the instructions printed on the back of each panel.

1/8" MDF panels should be installed over a suitable noncombustible backing such as gypsum wallboard.

Consult your local building codes for approved application. Be sure to read the instructions printed on the back of each panel. Do not install MDF direct-to-studs in Mobile Homes. Do not install MDF paneling in full panel applications in Mobile Homes.

**Caution:** WESTERN VISTA® paneling must be installed over a suitable noncombustible backing such as gypsum wallboard. Consult your local building codes for approved application. Be sure to read the instructions printed on the back of each panel. **Caution:** These products contain a urea formaldehyde resin and may release formaldehyde vapors in low concentrations. Formaldehyde can be irritating to the eyes and upper respiratory system, especially to susceptible persons such as those with allergies or respiratory ailments. Use with adequate ventilation. Do not use MDF wall paneling in mobile homes! If symptoms develop, consult your physician. A Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) containing potential physical and health hazard information is available on the Murphy Web site at [www.murphyplywood.com](http://www.murphyplywood.com) or by contacting: Murphy Company, 2350 Prairie Road, Eugene, OR 97402.

**Caution:** Murphy prefinished paneling is a wood based product and is combustible. Care should be taken in installing panels to allow for space between panels and heat producing appliances and ignition sources. Consult your local building code authority for guidelines and requirements.

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