

How to Install Vinyl Siding

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If you want to improve the look of your home without painting, vinyl siding is a popular, affordable choice. Many homeowners and builders choose it because it's long-lasting, durable, inexpensive and relatively easy to install and maintain.

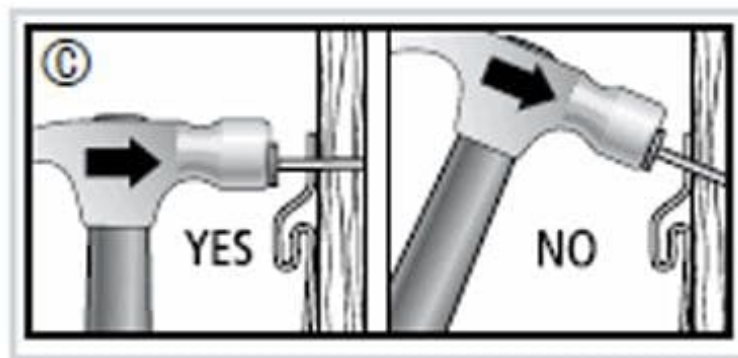
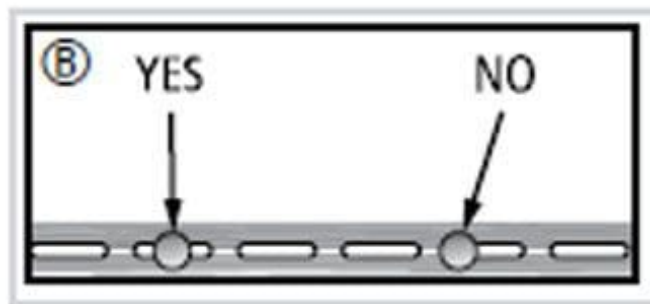
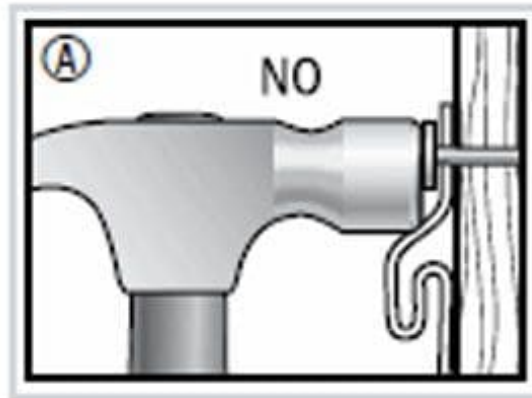


Vinyl Siding Installation Tips

Vinyl comes in a variety of grains, thicknesses and colors, making it a practical choice for many homeowners. We'll give you tips on preparing your home, cutting vinyl siding and installing the siding panels.

Check out our [Siding Buying Guide](#) for more siding installation tips and inspiration.

Whether you're replacing vinyl siding or installing it for the first time, here's how to get the job done.



Allow for Expansion and Contraction

- Vinyl siding installation must allow for material expansion and contraction caused by weather.
- Cut your siding in lengths with a 1/4-inch gap for expansion wherever siding butts accessories.

- Include a 3/8-inch gap when installing exterior siding in areas with weather below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

Choose the Right Nails

- Use galvanized stainless steel or aluminum roofing nails with a head diameter of 3/8 inch.
- The nails should measure at least 1-3/4 inches in length, long enough to penetrate into the nailable base at least 3/4 inch.

Don't Drive the Nails Tight

Allow approximately 1/16 inch between the nailhead and vinyl. This will permit expansion and contraction as well as prevent dimpling that causes waves in siding [fig. A].

Center the Nails in the Vinyl Siding Slots

Don't nail to the extreme right or left of nail slots in the siding panels [fig. B].

Keep the Nails Straight and Level

Use your hammer carefully: Crooked nails will distort the siding panels, causing the panels to buckle [fig. C].

Don't Face-Nail

Nailing directly into vinyl siding panels will restrict horizontal movement and cause the panels to buckle.

Never Pull Siding Taut When Nailing

- Pulling the panel taut stretches the panel out of shape and causes an undesirable lap joint.
- Panels should be pushed up from the bottom until full lock contact is made and then you can nail them into place.

Space the Nails Properly

Siding panels should be nailed 12 inches to 16 inches on-center.

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Vinyl Siding Cutting Methods

Aviation and Tin Snips

Start cutting with your tin snips at the top interlock and continue toward the bottom of the panel.

Utility Knife

Score the panel with a [utility knife](#) and then bend the vinyl back and forth until it snaps cleanly on the scored line.

Power Saw, Table Saw or Miter Saw

- Use a [power saw](#), [table saw](#) or [miter saw](#) equipped with a fine-tooth [saw blade](#) to make slow-cutting movements.
- Reverse the blade in the saw for smooth cutting through the vinyl and less chipping.

Surface Preparation for Vinyl Siding Installation

- Securely nail all loose boards and wood trim and replace any rotten boards.
- Scrape away old caulking around windows and doors. The buildup of old caulking interferes with the positioning of new trim for the siding.
- Remove downspouts, lighting fixtures and moulding where they'll interfere with the exterior siding installation.
- The windowsill extensions may be cut off so new trim can be installed flush with the window casing.
- Tie back shrubbery and trees where they're close to the wall. This will give you more room to work and help you avoid damaging the landscaping.

Use Exterior Siding Furring

In new construction, furring strips aren't usually necessary. However, older homes often have uneven walls. These walls should be furred out to prevent a wavy appearance in the finished vinyl siding job.

Over Wood Subsurface

Lath strips are the most commonly used for furring over a wood surface.

Over Masonry Subsurface

When furring over masonry, install 1-inch-by-3-inch wood with masonry nails over the masonry area to be sided.

On Horizontal Siding

- Strips should be installed vertically on 12-inch to 16-inch centers.
- Furring should be installed completely around doors, windows and other openings, at all corners and at the top and bottom of the area to be sided.

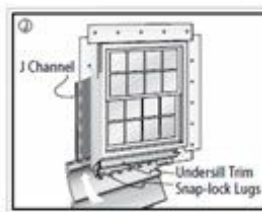
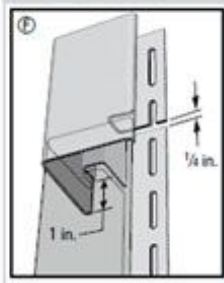
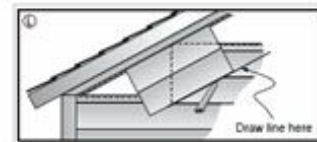
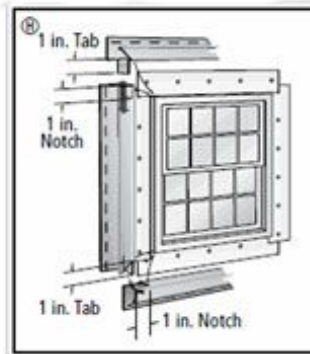
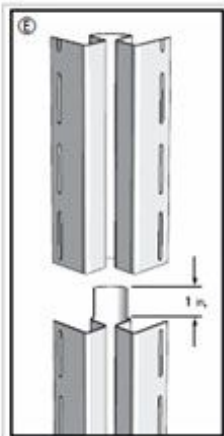
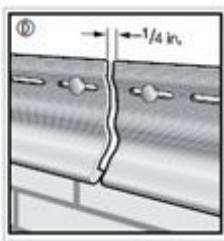
With Vertical Siding

- Furring vertical siding uses the same method as for horizontal siding.
- Strips should be nailed horizontally to materials, like structural lumber, on 12-inch to 16-inch centers.

Furred Existing Siding

- Furred existing siding should be covered with sheet insulation.
- The spaces between the furring strips should be filled in with sheet insulation equal in thickness to the furring strips.
- This will provide an even wall surface for the siding and help avoid any waviness.

Insulation for Vinyl Siding



House wrap or foam board insulation helps insulate and level out the exterior of a house. Some manufacturers strongly caution against the use of drop-in type foam or fiberboard behind their vinyl siding. This type of insulation may change and flatten the contour of the panel, causing the siding to bulge or ripple.

Find the lowest corner of the old siding or sheathing on the house. Partly drive a nail 1-1/2 inch higher than the lowest corner. Stretch a chalk reel line from this nail to a similar nail at the next corner. Be sure the line is level. Snap the line and repeat the same procedure around the entire house.

Position the starter strip even with the top edge of the chalk line and allow room for corner posts. Nail it to the wall.

When the wall surface is uneven, shim out the starter strip to avoid a wavy appearance in the finished siding job. Drive in nails to remove excess play in the starter strip, but don't nail in tight enough to restrict all movement. As you add starter strip sections, be sure to leave 1/4-inch space between strips for expansion [fig. D].

Install vinyl inside corner posts at the existing corners, 3/4 inch below the bottom of the starter strip. If you'll be using vinyl soffit, allow for space below the underside of eaves for soffit installation accessories. The amount of space needed varies with accessories.

Set corner posts straight and true. Nail them to the adjoining walls, starting at the top and placing nails at the top of the uppermost nailing slots. Allow the posts to hang on these nails.

The rest of the nails should be placed every 8 to 12 inches in the center of the nail slots. This will allow vertical expansion of the corner posts. Don't nail anything too tight.

If more than one length of inside corner post is required, make a splice as follows: Cut 1 inch off all of them except for the outer face of the upper portion of the lower corner post. Lay 3/4 inch of the upper post over the lower post, allowing 1/4 inch for expansion [fig. E].

Position the outside corner post to allow a 1/4-inch gap at the top where the post will meet the eaves. Cut the post long enough to extend past the bottom of the starter strip by 3/4 inch. If you're using vinyl soffit, allow proper distances (which vary according to the accessory used) below the underside of the eaves.

Attach the posts by placing a nail in the top of the upper slot on each side. The posts will hang on these two nails. The rest of the nails should be placed in the center of the slots, 8 to 12 inches on-center. This allows for expansion and contraction to occur at the bottom. Remember not to nail them too tight.

If more than one length of outside corner post is required, make a splice as follows: Cut 1 inch of the nailing flanges and receiving channel stops away from the bottom portion of the upper post. Then lap 3/4 inch of the upper post over the lower post allowing 1/4 inch for expansion [fig. F].

Cut 2-1/2-inch flaps [fig. G]. Bend the flaps to close off the post. Use a rivet if necessary.

Install the J-channel exterior siding trim around all four sides of your windows and doors. Install the J-channel against the casing and nail it to the wall without driving too tight [fig. H].

Cut and install the bottom J-channel flush with the sides of the window casing. Install the side J-channels flush with the lower face of the bottom J-channel and the top of the window casing.

Cut a tab in the bottom of the side J-channels and fold it under. Cut and install the top J-channel flush with the outer face of the side Js. Then cut and bend the drain tab.

Install the bottom J-channel extending past the side casing for the width of the J-channel face on each end. Cut out a 3/4-inch notch in the back of each end and install it. Cut a 3/4-inch notch in the bottom of side J-channels and then bend the tab. Miterring the bottom side J-channel gives a false fully mitered appearance when it's installed like this.

Tip

For miter saw tips, check out [How to Use a Miter Saw](#).

Snap the bottom of the panel into a starter strip and nail it to the wall. Begin panel installation at the back corner of your house and work towards the front. Leave a 1/4-inch space where each panel butts the corner post. The siding should be lapped away from high-traffic areas like doors and sidewalks.

Overlap each panel 1 to 1-1/4 inches on the factory pre-notched cutouts. Your last nail should be at least 10 inches from the end of each panel to allow for a neat lap.

After completing the first course, work your way up. Start each course at the back of the house and continue toward the front. Stagger your joints properly, lapping them away from the street and entrance.

Leave a 1/4-inch gap where the panels butt corner posts and J-channels around windows. Allow an extra 3/8 inch when installing in weather that's below 40 degrees Fahrenheit [fig. I].

Tip

For the best visual appearance, don't stair-step or concentrate the lap joints too much.

When you reach a window, you'll probably have to cut the siding panels to fit under the opening. Make this panel extend on both sides of the window. Measure the panel to fit by holding the siding panel under the window and mark the width of the opening on the panel. Allow a 1/4-inch clearance on each side of the window.

Next, lock a scrap piece of siding into the panel below, butting it against the window. Mark the height needed, allowing 1/4-inch clearance below the sill. Measure both sides of the window opening this way. Use the scrap piece as a guide to mark horizontal cuts on the siding panel [fig. J].

Make vertical cuts on the siding panel with your saw or [tin snips](#). Then score horizontally with a utility knife and remove the section.

Install the under-sill trim along the width of the window and flush to the casing. Furring may be necessary to maintain the proper pitch of the siding. Use the snap lock punch to punch the panel 1/4 inch below the cut edge at 6-inch intervals. The resulting raised lugs should face outward and they'll snap into the under-sill trim.

Measure and cut the panels to fit in the same manner detailed in Step 14, except cut the lower portion instead of the top. Be sure to check both sides for a proper fit. Install this panel and then drop the siding panel into the J-channel around the top of the window and attach it.

Nail the under-sill trim to the sidewall flush with the eave of your house. It may be necessary to fur out the under-sill trim for maintaining the proper pitch of the top siding panel. More than one length of under-sill trim may be required under the eave and will need to be spliced.

Measure and cut the top panel to fit. To determine how much of the top panel must be cut off, measure the distance between the top of the under-sill trim and the lock of the panel below and then deduct 1/4 inch. Cut the top siding panel to this dimension as well. Just note that the panel will no longer have a nailing strip after cutting [fig. K].

Punch the top panel with a snap lock punch. Insert the cut panel into the trim and draw a line on the panel where they meet. Using the snap lock punch tool, punch the panel on top of this line every 6 inches so that the raised material is on the outside face.

Lock the bottom of the panel into the panel below and push the top edge into the under-sill trim. The raised slots will catch and hold the panel firmly in place. Remember, don't face-nail the siding.

First, nail the J-channel to the sidewall flush with the gable. If more than one length of J-channel is required to finish one side of the gable, a splice will be needed. To cut panels at the proper angle, use two scrap pieces of siding to make a pattern for cutting.

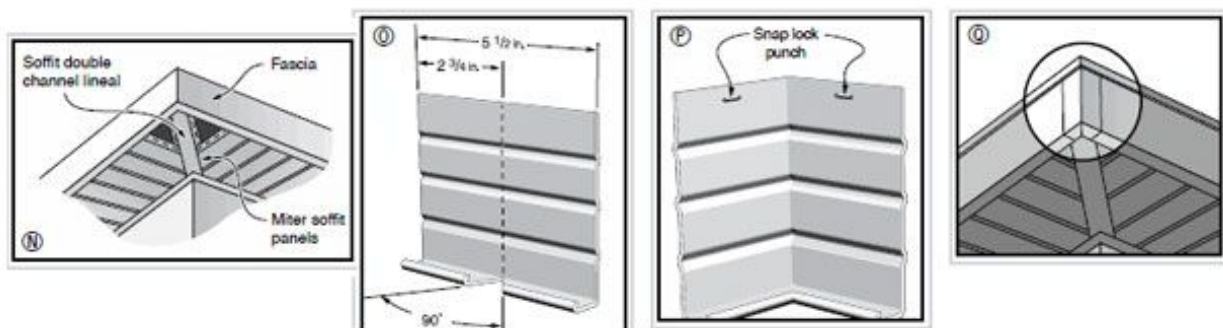
Interlock one panel with the siding panel below, hold the other piece on top against the gable. Then mark a line on the bottom piece and cut. This piece is now a pattern for cutting panels to fit along one side of the gable. Follow the same procedure to make a pattern for the other side [fig. L]. Lock the pre-cut siding panel into the siding panel that's below and then slide the siding panel into the J-channel.

Tip

Be sure to include a 1/4-inch expansion gap between the siding and gable-end J-channel. Keep that gap at 3/8 inch in freezing weather.

Vinyl Soffit and Fascia Installation Guide

Use the following instructions for vinyl soffit and fascia installation.



Open Eave Installation

For open overhangs, use vinyl siding F-trim that's nailed to the wall of the house. Use a level to make pencil marks parallel with the lower edge of the wood fascia board at the end of each wall. These are for reference points. From these marks, measure up 7/8 inch and strike a chalk line.

Along this line, install the F-trim with its top leg on the chalk line. This step is important since the F-trim or J-channel forms the back support for the soffit panel. Intermediate nailing supports should be installed on eaves over 16 inches wide.

Closed Eave Installation

Install 1/2-inch J-channels on the inside wall and behind the fascia board [fig. M]. Measure the distance between the 1/2-inch J-channels from one back edge to another. Then cut the soffit panels according to these dimensions, allowing 1/4-inch clearance for contraction and expansion. On panels longer than 36 inches, leave 1/4 inch on each end and use solid panels.

For areas needing ventilation, use perforated soffit. After cutting the panels to the desired length, insert the end into the supporting J-channel or F-trim. Line the panel up correctly and nail the panel to the existing soffit through the nailing hem.

After the first panel is installed, insert the locking leg of the second panel into the installed panel, covering the nailing hem. Fit the panels together snugly to protect against shifting. Intermediate nailing supports are necessary for panels wider than 16 inches.

How to Turn Corners Using Vinyl Siding

When turning corners, it may be necessary to miter the soffit panel to the proper angle. Use two 1/2-inch J-channels back-to-back to create additional support for the panels [fig. N].

How to Close the Soffit Ends

Use 1/2-inch J-channels cut to length and installed with nails into the overhang. Fit them into the F-trim and J-channel supporting soffit panel. When using both soffit and fascia, install a frieze runner (F-trim) on the bottom of the fascia board and then complete the soffit installation.

Prepare for installing the fascia panels by applying an under-sill vinyl siding trim along the top of the fascia board. Hook the bottom lock of the fascia panel over the F-trim that's installed on the bottom of the fascia board. Then insert the top edge of the fascia into the under-sill trim.

Use a snap lock punch tool on the fascia panel to punch out raised slots every 6 inches to hold the fascia in place. For proper fit and to avoid waviness, run the F-trim and under-sill trim straight. We recommend using a chalk line to achieve the right fit.

To make the corner cap, cut a piece of fascia 5-1/2 inches in length. Mark the vertical centerline on the back cut. Cut out a 90-degree section of the bottom flange from the center, leaving 45 degrees on each side. Using a hand-seamer metal ruler, fold along the vertical centerline to form a right angle corner. Punch the top edge of the corner cap with your snap lock punch tool. The corner cap is then hooked onto the bottom ends of the fascia, and the top is snapped into place in the under-sill trim [figs. O, P, Q]. Be sure you don't face-nail vinyl fascia panels.

Good to Know

These instructions are only intended to provide general installation guidelines. Check with local building codes for any additional requirements regarding wall preparation and vinyl siding installation.