

Gluing Laminate to Drywall

It's not as straightforward as it sounds, according to this February 2013 thread

The customer wants laminate backsplash up the entire wall from counter to cabinet. The house is circa 1855, and the cabinets are the built-in-place style from the last remodel in the '60s. Usually I can slip the laminate behind the cabs a ¼ inch or so and avoid trying to template it exactly. But to do so here means I have to slide the laminate up the wall behind the cabs, which is a tight fit in places ... No way to do this with contact cement.

I'm looking for an adhesive I can maybe apply to the wall with a notched trowel and which would give me [a 15-minute] working time. Anyone have experience with alternative glues for laminate?
—*John/Charleston, Charleston, S.C.*

Trowel-on Liquid Nails? [liquidnails.com] —*tjbnwi1*

I didn't see laminates in the "recommended" list [for the LN series], but looking further I find [the CB10/CBP10 series], which does have "plastic laminates" in the list and may be my best bet. Water cleanup is always a plus.
—*John/Charleston*

The problem with your scheme here is that you want to put bare laminate on ... drywall or plaster. That's not a good idea. Don't ask how I know.

You really want to apply the laminate to a sheet of at least 1/4" plywood, MDF, or similar. Then you can glue that to the wall any way you like. To avoid a real long scribe, use a trim piece—whatever is appropriate with the decor.
—*dgblldr, Michigan*

Customer wants no trim [she's an architect], but I don't follow why laminate directly on to the drywall is a bad idea. I've seen it done plenty of times. —*John/Charleston*

Plastic laminate may not be specifically listed, but PL Premium and Liquid Nails work well ... I would be more inclined to use a grabber adhesive, like the stuff for shower stalls or, better yet, Loctite WB construction adhesive, but I know the urethane-based adhesives work. You could also try adhesive made for FRP panels.

Every Walmart has miles of plastic laminate stuck directly to drywall ... I'm not saying it's good design ... [but] it's not a bad idea. The substrate has to be a flat, smooth surface, primed with a paint that allows for a strong mechanical bond, and there has to be a way of terminating the laminate so it looks finished and nothing can get behind it. —*dave_k*

Wilsonart emailed me back and said:

"[Laminate applied to drywall] is not a recommended application due to the internal bond strength of the material.

"With that said, we do know it is done quite frequently and if working time is required, a Liquid Nails product will give you the best opportunity of maneuvering the laminate during the open time of the adhesive. Contact [cements], as you mentioned, dry much quicker and do not allow for working time; water-based adhesives would not be efficient either due to the moisture of the glue being adsorbed during the drying time by a paper-based product such as drywall. If Liquid Nails is

utilized, make sure a uniform coverage is created [to avoid] the glue line telegraphing through the laminate. This can be addressed by using a thicker product, such as our 350 product, which has more mass and can help mask the glue line after bonding."

Formica Corp. called me back and said that there are no adhesives that will work with laminate on drywall (including contact cement).

So it sounds like both companies agree with dgblldr that it's a bad idea. I told the customer what Formica said and she said, "Just put it up. I've been warned." She's an old customer and I can count on her to stand by her word, so I'm going to put it up with something tomorrow.
—*John/Charleston*

I am guessing we are talking about 18"+/- vertical laminate, and if using a "thick" laminate, perhaps an adhesive is not necessary (esp. given the "wonky walls") You mention an electrician. He is probably installing receptacles about 4"-0" o.c. and likely to the lower side of the 18" vertical.

Perhaps use the "thick" laminate variety and let the electrical cover plates be the mechanical "clamp" on the low side of the backsplash (high side captive by uppers), and sparingly apply adhesive to any areas not otherwise clamped/captive. This may result in a flatter/non-deformed backsplash and also provide the opportunity to selectively use adhesive should the need arise. —*Charlie V*

I really didn't mean to start a thread about if it's a good idea to put laminate on drywall. I'm OK with the idea. —*John/Charleston*