

Crisp Corners

FOR DRYWALL

The right way
to install metal,
vinyl, and
paper-faced
corner beads

BY MYRON R. FERGUSON



I always like to tell my coffee story when I talk about corner beads—the moldings that cover and protect the outside corners of drywall. I typically just drink regular coffee with cream, but when I go to a coffee shop today and look at the menu, there are so many unfamiliar names and choices that I'm not even sure if they sell coffee.

It's kind of the same idea with corner beads. Just try calling a drywall yard to order a box of 8-ft. square-edge corner bead. When I started in the business, that was all I had to ask for, and I would get a box of metal nail-on corner—the standard galvanized bead with the knurled 1½-in. flanges and the occasional hole for nailing. It's not so easy today. Do you want the metal, the paper-faced metal, the paper-faced vinyl, the glue-on vinyl, or the mud-set vinyl? And do you want that in jumbo or standard size? Maybe you even want the corner bead that comes in a roll?

These days there are many options to choose from and a lot of ways to install corner beads, some involving specialty tools. But most square-edge corner beads, including the three shown here, can be installed quickly and easily without anything special. All are designed to sit proud of the wall, creating a space for joint compound to cover the bead's flanges. Most can be cut with a miter saw, but tin snips are also fine for most applications. All should butt tight to the ceiling and be left about ½ in. short of the floor to prevent cracking as the house settles. Beyond that, the biggest difference among beads is how they are installed. □

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Prep the drywall

Don't try to create crisp corners with drywall alone; that's what the corner bead is for. For proper installation, all corner beads require the drywall to be set back a bit from the corner (the amount of setback varies by bead profile). If the drywall extends even just a little past the corner, the corner bead won't fit tight against the drywall, making it difficult to attach and finish properly. For square-edge beads, the drywall should be set back at least 1/16 in., but not more than 1/8 in. To ensure that the edge of the bead sits proud of the wall, avoid putting the tapered edges of drywall on corners.



Mind the gap. Attach one piece of drywall flush with the corner, then attach the next piece up to 1/8 in. back from the corner so that the corner bead can sit flush on both sides.



Bevel the edge. To cut back overhanging edges in places too tight for a drywall saw or where a drywall saw might damage the adjoining drywall surface, use a utility knife to create a chamfer.

Rip long edges. Use a drywall saw to cut back any edges of drywall that hang beyond the framing so that the next piece sits tight to the framing.



Metal

Light-gauge galvanized-metal corner bead is generally the least expensive option and has been used for many years with good results. These beads are attached before taping begins, usually by the drywall-hanging crew. Drywall nails are typically used to attach them to wood framing, and self-tapping metal-framing screws are used with steel framing.

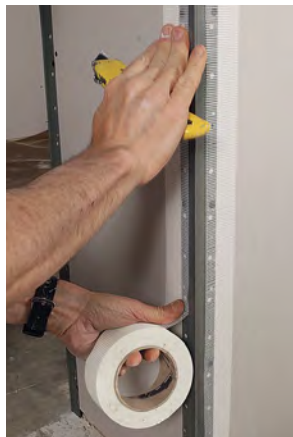
Metal is the only type of bead that attaches directly to the framing, and its hold is tenacious. But because the bead is only attached every 8 in., it's somewhat prone to cracking along the flange edges. Also, despite being galvanized, some corner bead will rust, so it needs to be stored in a dry location before installation and isn't the best option for rooms where high humidity or moisture are expected, such as bathrooms.



Tap it flush. Set the bead on the corner tight to the ceiling, and use the butt end of your hammer to gently tap it into place so that it sits flat on both sides. There's no adjusting once it's nailed on.



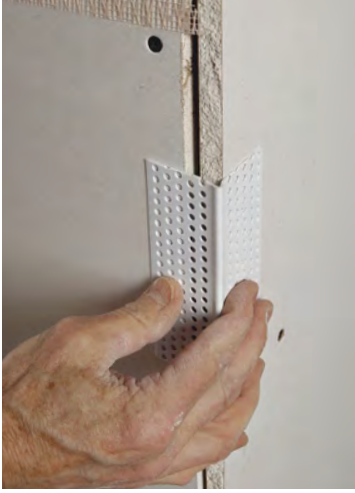
Don't stagger. Fasten every 8 in. along the flanges through the small holes—I prefer drywall nails over screws for this—and always put the fasteners in opposition, not staggered. Staggering can cause the edge on the other side to pucker out.



Avoid cracks. Apply self-adhering mesh tape over the flanges and onto the drywall to help prevent cracking along the edges.



Coat it. Use all-purpose joint compound for the first coat over the mesh tape and flanges. Use lighter-weight compounds for the finish coats.



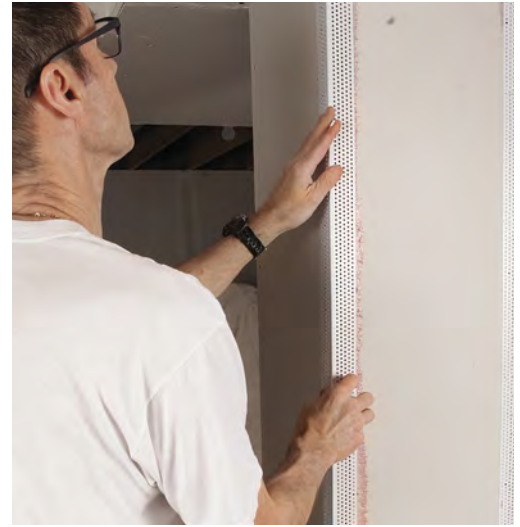
Glue-on vinyl

These corner beads go on before taping starts, so the drywall hangers often install them. Some manufacturers suggest backing up the spray adhesive with 1/2-in. divergent staples, which have legs that skew slightly when driven into the drywall to resist pullout (see p. 45, bottom right). That's the method I use.

Some manufacturers recommend spraying adhesive onto both the drywall and the bead itself for a better hold, but it really depends on the brand. Manufacturers differ on how long to wait to install the bead after applying the adhesive. Some recommend letting the adhesive tack up first, and others—including Trim-Tex, whose product is used here—recommend installing the bead immediately after spraying the adhesive. If I'm installing the bead when the glue is wet, I find that a medium-heavy coat of adhesive on the drywall alone is sufficient when backed up with staples. If the manufacturer recommends allowing it to tack up first, I spray both the bead and the drywall. In either case, I've found that these beads offer excellent crack resistance.



Spray both sides. Spray a medium-heavy coat of adhesive to both sides of the corner. Don't spray too far beyond the area the flanges will cover.



Set the bead. After setting the bead tight to the ceiling, press it firmly into the adhesive. Finger pressure is typically enough to get a good bond with wet adhesive, but it can't hurt to sweep a drywall knife along the flanges with heavy pressure to help tacky adhesive stick.



Back it up. Drive divergent staples into the flanges every 6 in. to 8 in. to bolster the bead's connection to the wall.



Wait and cover. Allow about 30 minutes for the adhesive to dry, then apply a coat of all-purpose joint compound to the flanges. Use lighter-weight compounds for the finish coats.

THREE-WAY CORNERS

Trim to fit. Where three wall planes meet at a point, trim the ends of the corner beads at an angle so that they don't overlap. For accuracy, cut and install the first piece, then mark the cut angles for successive pieces in place. Test the fit, then install using the method appropriate for that bead.



Give it a coat. Cover all sides of the corner at the same time with all-purpose joint compound. Use lighter-weight compounds for the finish coats.



Paper-faced metal

The paper on this type of corner bead covers and extends past the metal. Joint compound is formulated to stick well to paper, and these beads have a well-deserved reputation for resisting edge cracking. Actually, the paper on these beads pulls double duty: It helps to bond the bead to the drywall, and it holds the compound that goes over it better than metal alone.

Because joint compound is the glue that holds paper-faced metal and other "tape-on" beads to the corner, these beads are usually installed by the drywall-taping crew—and after the inside corners and flat seams are taped. Tape-on beads, also called mud-set beads, come in various forms, but those without paper facing usually install in similar fashion.

Set tape-on beads with heavier-weight joint compounds such as all-purpose or taping compound, which bond and resist cracking better than other types of drywall mud, and don't skimp on the compound. Use a heavier compound as well for the fill coat, but use lighter-weight compounds for the finish coats.



Cut outside in. Mark the cut line, then use tin snips to cut toward the corner from each side of the bead, meeting in the middle.



Mud both sides. Use a 4-in. to 6-in. tapping knife to apply an even coat of joint compound to both sides of the corner.



Set and press. Set the bead squarely onto the corner, butting it tight to the ceiling, and gently press it into the joint compound.



Swipe the excess. Use the tapping knife to remove most of the excess joint compound from both sides of the bead, but don't yet fully embed the paper flanges.



Check for square. Use the tapping knife as a straightedge along multiple points on both sides of the corner bead to ensure that it's properly aligned. There should be a slight gap between the edge of the knife and the flanges of the bead on both sides of the corner.



Embed the flanges. Use heavier pressure on the knife to remove excess compound from behind the paper flanges so that they sit flat against the wall. Wait until the compound dries to apply fill and finish coats over the flanges.



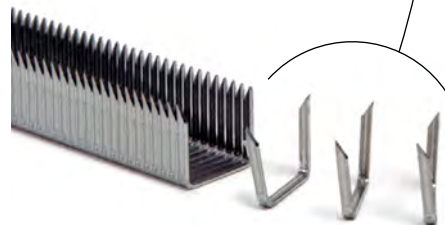
CALL FOR BACKUP

If bubbles appear, use the tapping knife to pry back the paper flange. Apply extra joint compound behind the flange, and smooth it flat to the drywall.



CALL IN REINFORCEMENTS

Apply a small piece of fiberglass-mesh tape over the ends of intersecting corner beads to help prevent cracking at this juncture. If the bead won't sit flat because the corner is slightly under 90°, drive divergent staples through the metal flanges to pull them and hold them tight to the drywall.



Divergent points cause the staple to splay when driven.