# Upholstering Walls With Batting

By Lisa Powelson
Atlanta, GA

## Materials and Supplies

- Fabric, I suggest solid or a small repeat for first timers
- Trim or gimp to cover staples
- Batting, ½ oz. or ¾ oz. weight, the same yardage as fabric
- Staple gun, one that allows you to get close to corners
- Staples, ⅜ inch
- Air compressor, if you have a pneumatic stapler
- Cardboard tack strip, smaller width than your trim
- Pushpins
- Staple puller/needle nose pliers

- Scissors, small and large
- Razor blades for trimming
- Tape measure
- Ladder
- Screwdrivers for removing outlets, Phillips and standard
- Laser level or level
- Fringe adhesive or hot glue
- Extension cord
- Markers, walls and fabric
- Trash bag
- Shop vac
- Camera

I enjoy an upholstery challenge, and upholstering walls was one experience that was high on my "projects I'd like to do" list. I took a class at Vision 2009 and also participated in CHFA's webinar with Laurie Medford. I was ready for the challenge! So when a client asked whether I would upholster walls in a powder room, how could I say no?

There are numerous processes for upholstering walls, which can include: stapling directly to the wall, applying the fabric with starch (much like wallpapering) and applying the fabric to a separate surface (e.g., plywood) and then installing to a wall. For this project, I stapled the fabric directly to the wall over batting.

Overall the experience was challenging and rewarding! I estimated it would take me four to five hours for a small powder room (six widths of fabric and trim). With help, it took all of eight hours with no break! But the result is beautiful! Here's how I did it.

**Part I Measure for Fabric and Trim**
**Step 1** Measure your walls (height and width) — do not subtract for windows or doors. Keep these measurements in mind as you consider pattern and wall size when deciding on your fabric and layout.

**Step 2** Determine your fabric requirements by first taking your height measurement. Divide the fabric's pattern repeat (inches) into the total wall height measurement. The results will determine the total number of repeats (you have to round up to a whole number, then add one additional repeat.

For example:
108 inches high / 5-inch pattern repeat = 21.6 repeats, rounded to 22 repeats + 1 additional = 23 repeats needed. 23 repeats x 5-inch repeat = 115 inches cut length.

**Step 3** Determine your width requirements. Total width divided by fabric width = number of widths required. For example:
Total width of room is 432 inches / 54 inches (fabric width) = 8 widths

**Step 4** Calculate your yardage. Cut length multiplied by number of widths divided by 36 inches = total yardage required. For example:
115 inches CL x 8 (widths) = 920 inches / 36 inches = 25.5 yards (rounded up to 26 yards).

**Step 5** Measure for trim. The edges and staples can be trimmed with decorative gimp, fabric trim, self-welt or decorative molding, to name a few. If you decide to use decorative fabric trim, determine your yardage based on the linear inches of the areas to be trimmed (e.g., around windows, doors, ceiling, floor molding, corners, etc.).

**Part II Cut Fabric, Seam and Serge**
Cut your panels to the required length based on your measurements above, making sure to pattern match your top edge of each panel to the next panel (if patterned fabric). If your width of walls requires more than one width, then seam together (be sure to remove selvage and pattern match) the necessary number of widths just for that wall. Iron the seams flat. If you want, you can serge the raw edges or the selvage of the panels to reduce fraying and pulling during handling and installation.

**Part III Prep walls and Apply Batting**
I used a ¾-oz. batting on the walls, which gave it a nice loft. Based on what you're trying to achieve, you can either increase or decrease the weight of the batting.

**Step 1** Remove any nail heads or protruding objects from the walls. Remove faceplates from outlets and switches, air ducts, etc. Be sure to ask the homeowner to have an electrician remove any hardwired lighting on the walls (if necessary) before the installation.

**Step 2** Sparingly staple the batting to the walls. Leave a gap between the top of the batting and the ceiling as well as between the bottom of the batting and the floor that will accommodate applying your trim on a smooth, flat surface. If you're using gimp or a small trim, a 1- to 2-inch gap is sufficient. Smooth the batting downward from the top. Cut the batting away from switches, outlets, windows and doorframes.

**Part IV Apply the Fabric**
**Step 1** Begin applying the fabric in an inconspicuous corner. Generally with wallpaper you start at the edge of a door or window, but with this small bathroom, I felt the corner was the best option. Verify your corner is plumb with your level, and make adjustments if needed to ensure you're installing the fabric vertically straight.

**Step 2** If the corner isn't plumb, snap or draw a straight line as close as possible to the corner to use as your guide for hanging your fabric. If you have a laser level, set your plumb line at the corner to be your guide — no need to draw a line.

**Step 3** Apply your first panel(s) by tacking the fabric's leading edge (facedown) along your straight line. Next, apply tack strip along your stapled edge, into the corner to create a crisp, straight line (see Photos 1 and 2 at right). Be sure to keep your pattern matched as you staple the tack strip to keep the pattern from becoming distorted.

**Step 4** Flip the panel over, and continue tacking to the wall using pushpins. Begin at the top, working your way across to the next corner. To ensure your fabric is staying straight across the grain/pattern, use your laser level and shoot a level line across the fabric. Use this line as your guide when pulling the fabric down taut to the bottom. Alternatively, use your manual level, checking for level and adjusting pins at the bottom. Continue to check the fabric and adjust to eliminate any puckers, wrinkles or pleating. Complete the next corner by wrapping the fabric on your tack strip and pulling taut into the next corner.

**Step 5** Step back and visually verify that you are satisfied with the layout of your fabric. Make adjustments as needed. Patience is the key here. Steaming wrinkles is risky because the fabric can stretch.

**Step 6** Staple the fabric along the top, bottom and corner. Another option is to apply tack strip along the top and bottom edge of the walls, windows, doors, outlets, etc. to eliminate puckering (from staples) and secure your fabric beneath faceplates. You can also use finishing nails in the far corners to eliminate exposed staples. Once you've applied the finishing nail, pull the fabric back up over the nail with an upholsterer's tufting needle.

**Step 7** Trim the fabric away from the window frame, doors, outlets, etc., as necessary with a razor (or scissors).

**Step 8** When I got to the end of this particular project, I had to use a smaller piece of fabric leftover from another part of the bathroom. The tack strip helped keep the vertical line plumb just as a seam would have. (See Photo 3 at right).

**Part V Apply the Trim**
If you aren't using molding along the ceiling and floor, use cording, welting or gimp to finish the edges. Also trim around the windows and door frames to complete the finished look. Apply your trim using fringe adhesive or hot glue. (See Photo 4 at right). ✎

Back of Fabric

Along Plumb

1



Tack Strip

2



Batting

Face Fabric

Tack Strip

3



Trim

4