

Thinking about an accent wall? Read this first.

Board and batten, wainscoting, and custom millwork turn a plain wall into the room's architecture — no renovation required. Because it's built, not just painted, the details decide everything. Here's what to consider before you design yours.

Three ways to make a wall the feature

Paint only

A bold color on one wall. Fast and reversible — and on a textured wall, it can look like exactly what it is: paint. Best where the wall is already smooth.

Wallpaper

Pattern and texture without carpentry. A great feature wall — see our wallpaper guide for how to get the paper quantity and prep right.

Built millwork

Board and batten, wainscoting, or picture-frame molding — designed, built, and painted by the same team. Real depth, real shadow lines, nothing from a kit. This is the one people photograph.

What the process actually looks like

- 1 Consultation & design.** We look at the wall, the room's proportions, and your inspiration photos — then design the pattern to fit your wall, not a template.
- 2 Layout on the wall.** The design is measured and marked out in the room so you approve spacing and height before a single board is cut.
- 3 Build.** Boards and trim are installed, seams caulked, nail holes filled — carpentry done like it will be inspected, because it will be, at three feet away.
- 4 Prime & paint.** The millwork and wall are finished as one piece with a durable enamel-grade paint in your color.
- 5 Walkthrough.** We check lines, corners, and shadow gaps with you from the doorway — where the wall will actually be seen from.

How long? Most single accent walls take two to three days including paint. Stairwell walls and two-story entries take longer — and are worth it: they're the first thing guests see.

Things to consider before you decide

- **Pick the right wall.** The feature wall is the one the room already looks at — the headboard wall, the wall behind the sofa, the first wall you see from the entry. Fighting the room's natural focal point never wins.
- **Proportions are the design.** Wainscoting height, batten spacing, and panel size are math before they're style: thirds and eye-level lines read 'intentional'; random heights read 'mistake'.
- **Texture tells.** Millwork over heavy orange-peel texture can look busy where boards meet wall. Smoother walls give cleaner shadow lines — ask whether your wall needs skim work first.
- **Color is half the architecture.** Deep tones (navy, forest, charcoal) make millwork dramatic; the wall color carried onto the trim is what makes it look built-in rather than applied.
- **Lighting will grade the work.** Raking light from a side window shows every wave and seam. Good builders finish for the light the wall actually gets.
- **Think past the wall.** An accent wall sets the room's direction — furniture, art, and the other walls all answer to it. Bring the whole room to the consultation.

Do this

- Approve the layout marked on the actual wall before building starts
- Ask to see the pattern math — spacing should be deliberate and even
- Paint millwork and wall as one system, trim included
- Bring inspiration photos — they calibrate taste faster than words

Skip this

- Choosing batten spacing from a photo of a different-sized wall
- Skipping caulk and fill — gaps are what separate built-ins from DIY
- Putting a feature wall on the room's darkest, least-seen wall
- Judging the color after one coat — millwork drinks the first coat

Five questions to ask any accent-wall builder

- Will you lay out the full design on my wall for approval before cutting?
- How do you handle seams, caulk lines, and nail holes before paint?
- Is the painting included, and with what kind of paint?
- How do you adapt the pattern to my wall's exact size?
- Can I see photos of walls you've built — up close, not just from the door?

Millwork is forever furniture for your wall. Hire someone who treats it that way.

In the southwest Twin Cities metro?

Schedule your **FREE consultation** — bring your inspiration photos — we'll design the wall to fit your room and build it as one piece.

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