

Thinking about drywall work? Read this first.

Nobody dreams about drywall — until they're staring at a cracked ceiling, a water stain, or orange-peel walls in a house that deserves better. Good drywall is invisible; bad drywall announces itself in every raking light. Here's how to tell the difference before you hire it.

Repair, rehang, or skim?

Repair

Cracks, holes, water damage, bad seams. Right when the damage is local — the craft is in making the patch disappear under paint, not just filling it.

Hang & finish

New walls and ceilings — basements, additions, garages. Board hung, taped, and finished to a paint-ready level, texture matched or smooth.

Skim & smooth

A full skim coat over textured or tired walls and ceilings for a modern smooth finish — including popcorn ceiling removal: scrape, prime, and paint. The biggest visual upgrade most homes can get.

What the process actually looks like

- 1 Consultation & assessment.** We look at what's damaged, what's textured, and what 'done' should look like in your light — and agree the finish level in plain language.
- 2 Protection & dust plan.** Drywall makes dust; a professional plan keeps it in the work area: plastic, floor protection, and ventilation before work starts.
- 3 Hang or repair.** Board hung and screwed to code, or damaged sections cut out and patched solid — never just floated over.
- 4 Tape & finish.** Seams taped and coated in stages, each coat dried and sanded, until the surface reads as one flat plane.
- 5 Prime — non-negotiable.** Fresh drywall and mud drink paint unevenly. A proper drywall primer seals it so the paint finish is even. Then texture or paint, as planned.

How long? Mud needs drying time between coats — most rooms run several days start to paint-ready, and rushing the dry is how seams photograph through paint forever. Popcorn removal on an average room is usually a two-to-three-day scrape-prime-paint sequence.

Things to consider before you decide

- **Finish level is the contract.** The trade grades finishes Level 0–5. Level 4 is the normal paint-ready standard; smooth ceilings in bright light may deserve Level 5 (a full skim). Agree the level in writing — 'smooth' means different things to different people.
- **Texture is a one-way door.** Smooth is the modern standard; knockdown hides a multitude of sins and matches most Minnesota homes.
- **Popcorn ceilings: test before you scrape.** Older popcorn can contain asbestos. A reputable contractor will raise testing on pre-1980s ceilings before anyone disturbs it — ask.
- **Primer is not optional.** New mud and board flash through paint as dull patches. If a quote looks light, ask whether primer is a separate line or missing entirely.
- **Dust honesty.** Anyone who promises zero dust is selling. The real questions: how is the area sealed, and who cleans at the end of each day?
- **Water damage has a source.** Fix the leak first and let the structure dry fully. Finishing over damp drywall guarantees a second project.

Do this

- Agree the finish level (and texture) in writing before work starts
- Ask how dust will be contained and cleaned
- Ask whether drywall primer is included — and where it's priced
- Check finished seams in low, raking light before final payment

Skip this

- Painting unprimed new drywall — it flashes, permanently
- Letting anyone scrape a pre-1980s popcorn ceiling without a testing conversation
- Judging a finish under a bare work bulb — use daylight
- Rushing coat dry-times to save a day

Five questions to ask any drywall contractor

- What finish level are you quoting — and is that in writing?
- How do you contain dust, and what do you clean each day?
- Is drywall primer included, and is it a separate line?
- How do you handle surprises — rot, bad framing, old damage behind the wall?
- Will the same crew paint it, or hand off to someone else?

Invisible work is the hardest to buy. These questions make it visible.

In the southwest Twin Cities metro?

Schedule your **FREE consultation** — we'll look at your walls and ceilings and tell you plainly what they'd take — repair, skim, or leave alone.

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