

Walls & Ceilings

Walls

Your home has two types of walls, bearing walls that are part of your home's structural frame and non-bearing walls. Generally, you may alter non-bearing walls as you like without fear of structural damage. Bearing walls, however, must be altered carefully to avoid reducing their structural capacity. For safety, consult a professional contractor before altering any wall.

Walls in modern homes are usually made of gypsum wallboard (drywall). They should last as long as your home with little maintenance. Sometimes normal shrinking will cause minor cracks or cause nails to pop from the wallboard.

The framing boards and the wallboard shrink away from the nail, leaving the nail sticking out beyond the surface of the wallboard. Popped nails do not alter the strength of the wall and should be left alone until you redecorate the room.

When redecorating, fill any cracks, repair any scuffs or dents, and reset and re-spackle any popped nails. Repaint or redecorate the wall surface.

Inspection

Although you see them every day, you should actually inspect your walls once a year. Look and feel along the walls for cracks and bowing, sagging, or leaning walls.

As discussed above, minor, straight, generally parallel cracks are common. Cracks at angles to each other, jagged cracks and open cracks, however, require your attention. If cracking is extensive, additional cracks develop, cracks change in size from season to season or cracks grow longer or wider, you should call a professional inspector, engineer or contractor to inspect for structural problems.

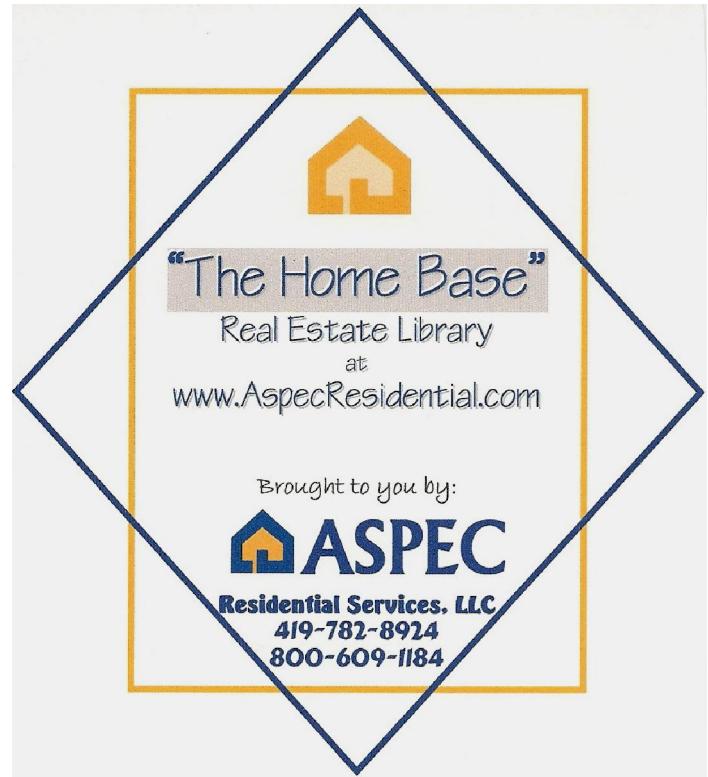
Minor sagging or softening of the wall material may indicate a water leak that should be repaired behind or above the damaged area. Bowed, sagging or leaning walls may indicate structural problems that should be inspected by a professional inspector, engineer or contractor.

Inspect wall coverings for signs of fraying, tearing and pulling away from the wall. Repairing minor problems in time will preserve the look and the life of your wall coverings.

Maintenance

The proper way to maintain your walls is to keep them free of spots and fingerprints. Clean anything on your walls that might result in a permanent stain as soon as you notice it.

When your walls become dirty, spot clean just the dirty areas whenever you can get away with it. If spot cleaning is not enough, proceed with a full washing. Wash from the top of the wall down, wiping off runs of cleaning solution as you go, before the runs have a chance to cause streaks.



Before washing any wall, however, wash a test area first to be sure that you will not damage the surface.

Ceilings

There are a wide variety of ceiling styles and covering materials. Your ceilings may be flat and level, detailed with coves, trays or other designs or pitched to follow the roof line (vaulted or cathedral ceilings). Wood beams may be exposed or all structural components may be covered by the ceiling materials.

The most common ceiling covering may be gypsum board, also known as sheet rock or plaster board. Other coverings include plaster, wood, tin, interlocking acoustical tiles and suspended ceilings. Whatever the style or materials, your ceilings should require little maintenance.

Inspection

Inspect your ceilings once a year when you inspect your walls. Look for [cracks](#), sags and bows. Minor ceiling cracks and nail pops, like minor wall cracks and nail pops, are normal and can be covered when you redecorate the room. More substantial cracks require more attention as set out in the wall inspection discussion above. A sagging or bowed ceiling indicates the ceiling material may be pulling away from its structural supports and should be inspected by a professional.

The roof above rooms with exposed wood ceilings or beams should be inspected regularly. Even small leaks can cause permanent water stains or wood damage. If you ever see signs of leaks in these rooms, have the problem repaired as soon as possible.

Maintenance

Clean cobwebs along your ceilings periodically with a broom or vacuum attachment. Other than that, your ceilings should require little attention.

You generally should not need to wash your ceilings. Even if a ceiling is dirty, the dirt will not be noticed if the ceiling is uniformly dirty. [Mold](#) on bathroom walls and cooking grease on kitchen ceilings can be cleaned with household cleaners.

You can repaint most ceilings to hide dirt, cover paint damage or redecorate the room. However ceilings are difficult to paint. Because ceilings receive less wear and tear than walls, they are generally repainted less frequently.