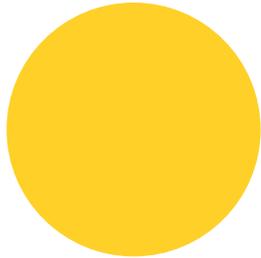


IMPROVEMENT CENTER



Guide to Prepping Your Home

Old siding: should it stay or should it go?

The fresh appearance that new siding can give a house may have you eager to get started on the installation, but don't begin nailing up panels quite yet.

Whether you're planning a DIY project or hiring a contractor, there's almost always a little preparatory work that must be done before your home can undergo its transformation. If the new siding is being installed on an existing house, the first step is deciding what to do about your current cladding.



Should old siding be removed?

Situations can differ, but in most cases there are several factors to consider before determining whether new siding can be installed right over the existing cladding:

- **Type and condition of the existing siding.** Wood is the only siding material over which contractors normally install new veneer, and even then, it depends on its condition. If your old wood siding has moisture or rotting damage that appears to be ongoing, siding over it usually only covers up the problem. As the material continues to deteriorate, future repairs may entail having to remove the new siding to reach the affected area.
- **Age of the home.** Many older houses were built without adequate insulation in their exterior walls -- and sometimes even without protective sheathing behind the siding. Removing the old siding can provide an opportunity to bring the insulation up to modern standards and to install, repair or replace sheathing, as needed. If your home suffers from the old-house, heating-and-cooling blues, this can be a step in the right direction.
- **Previous re-sidings.** If your home already has two layers of exterior cladding, removing both and starting fresh is usually a good decision from a cosmetic standpoint. Each layer of siding adds a little depth to the walls and if you have more than two, your windows and doors can begin to have a recessed appearance.
- **Budget.** A tight remodeling budget is perhaps the only good reason for leaving the existing siding on your home. Removing the old cladding may take a lot of time, and if you're using a contractor can add quite a few labor hours to your invoice.

Make safety a priority

While it may seem a simple task, removing the existing siding should be approached in the same fashion as any other home improvement project: Make safety a priority. It's just as easy to get injured removing siding as it is when installing. Whether you're removing wood, aluminum, or vinyl siding, keep these safety tips in mind:

- **Use proper ladder technique.** Never climb an extension ladder unless the top and bottom are completely secure and always adhere to the 75-degree-angle rule: For every four feet in ladder height the base should extend out from the wall one foot. You should also look for safety labels on the ladder concerning weight restrictions and cautions about climbing beyond certain rungs.
- **Keep your work area clean.** All old siding should be stacked in a place away from your work area as you remove it. One of the most common ways accidents occur is from tripping over debris in the work area.
- **Bend or remove all nails.** Do not underestimate the misfortune and serious consequences of stepping on an old rusty nail.

Home improvement safety is often just a matter of using your common sense. The most important tip might be to take your time and avoid rushing through the project.

