

# How to Install Wood Moldings

By Ron Specht



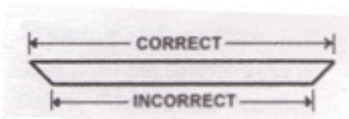
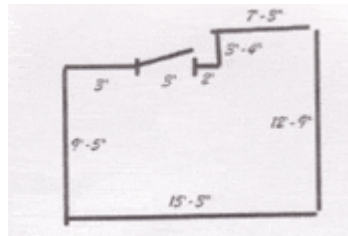
Installing decorative custom moldings in the home will give any room a distinctive style, while adding an elegant finishing touch.

In addition to crown moldings, there are baseboard, chair rail, window & door casings and many other molding styles to choose from. Browsing through a molding selection is the best way to shop for styles. As you do this, keep in mind that you can combine several moldings to make a larger detailed molding build up.

## How much molding will be needed?

Moldings are priced by the lineal foot, ranging from about 30 cents / ft to over \$15 / ft for elaborate architectural styles. Paint-grade pine or poplar is less expensive than oak or other hardwood moldings. You must first determine where you'll be installing your new moldings and then estimate the quantity needed. Most moldings are available in lengths up to 16 feet.

Make a list of the exact lengths you will need and then round your measurements up to the nearest foot. This will allow for trimming to the appropriate length.



When measuring for miters around windows and doors use the outside dimensions including the width of whatever molding you are using on both sides, not the inside dimensions. Always remember to round up.

## Tools and preparation

To cut and install moldings, you'll need at least a wooden miter box with a fine tooth crosscut saw, coping saw, measuring tape, combination square, hammer, nail sets, spackle, calk and sandpaper. If you have a lot of moldings to cut, you may find a power miter saw invaluable. These can be purchased for around \$100 and up, or you can rent one for about \$35 / day or less.

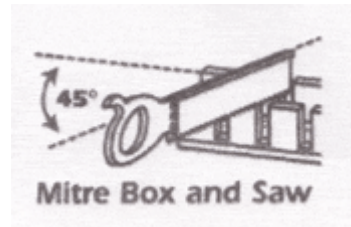
## Cutting and Fastening.

Miter window and door casings or chair rails at the corners by cutting each piece at a 45° angle in the miter box. A better way to join crown or base moldings at inside corners is to use a coped joint. It's best to cut, test the fit, make adjustments and install moldings one at a time. To be sure each cut is oriented in the right direction, it's best to do the cutting in the same room that you are installing the moldings.

For window and door casings, measure and cut the top piece first, allowing an extra ¼-inch reveal along the jambs. Then measure and cut the sides and then the bottom trim. Starting at the top, nail this piece in place and then work your way around the opening, fitting the corners tightly and nailing the pieces about every 16 inches to the jambs with 4d finishing nails and to the wall framing with 8d finishing nails.

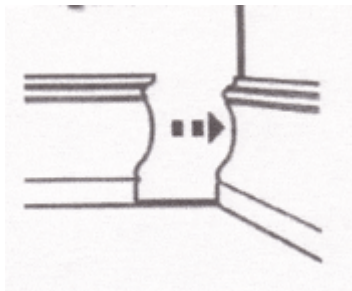
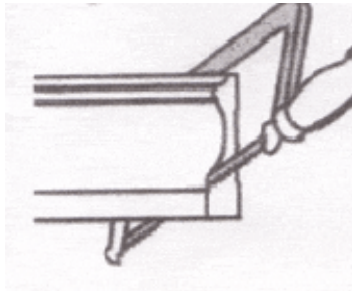
### Cutting Mitered Joints of flat moldings

Most mitered joints will be cut at a 45° angle. When trimming the two joining moldings, they should fit to form a right angle. It's a good idea to glue and nail the new joint.



### Coping inside corners

Coping is another way to join moldings at the inside corners. With this method the molding profile or shape is back cut to fit against the face of the adjoining molding.



First cut the molding at a 45° angle, with the extra length exposed. This exposed profile serves as a guideline for your coping saw. Follow the profile with the saw at a right angle. When completed you will have a copy of the molding profile. Butt the coped end into the corner and it should fit the other profile for a completed corner.

### Painting or Staining

If you are painting the moldings, your joints can be a little less precise than if you

intend to stain. Gaps and slight joint separations can be spackled and sanded prior to painting. You can also run a bead of latex caulk along the joints and between molding and walls or other surfaces. Painted moldings should be primed with two coats primer before installation, Fill gaps or holes and sand with a fine grit sandpaper between coats

For stained moldings, do the staining before installation. Miters and corners will need to be cut precisely to assure a good fit. After installation you can use wood filler that matches the stain color, or a putty stick to fill the nail holes.

Before nailing base or crown moldings in place, it's a good idea to mark the stud placements on the walls so you'll know where to nail. Lightly mark just above base molding or below crown molding positions. In most homes the studs are on 16-inch centers and double up around the doors and windows. You can usually find them by listening for a solid sound as you knock on the wall with one knuckle or you can probe with a small finish nail or drill bit where the moldings will cover. On most walls, there is also a 2x4 base plate and a top plate that runs horizontally along the floor and ceiling. Short moldings can be easily nailed to these.

As you nail, don't try to flush the nails with the hammer, this will usually dent the wood. Always leave the nails slightly protruding and then set the heads below the surface using a nail set. As mentioned above, caulk seams and spackle nail holes before sanding and painting. If staining, carefully fill nail holes with pigmented wood filler and touch up with matching stain.

Good Luck!!!!

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