When 26 contractors were asked simply, "How do you tape your corners?" they may as well have been asked, "What is your favorite beer?" because the answers they gave were not only different but completely correct.

As a contractor from Massachusetts pointed out, "With shortages of manpower, there are real variations for dealing with the same issue. On outsides, we clinch the metal bead to the wallboard with a clinching tool and then tape, or mud, it. There are a thousand words for it, but we just tape it in and go. I consider this the conventional way. We don’t use paper at all—it’s more expensive. Everyone has his own way of doing it. There are regional methods, and then there's the way each company, and the tapers in them, prefers to do it. There is a big difference in the way you tape when you do high-end residential and low-end residential, when you do high-end office and low-end office. We’re in the middle of the office market, which is why we do it the way we do the majority of the time. If someone specifies, ‘I want this,’ then we give him or her what they ask for. If they don’t, they get the usual.”

As a note, although “corners” strictly speaking refers to the outside corners and “angles” covers the inside corners, contractors took them as interchangeable in conversation, which explains the mix of inside and outside techniques given. Another word to clarify up front is “tape,” because tapers refer to mud or compound as “tape.” When the same trade uses the kind of tape that sits on spools, the use of the word “tape” can lead to confusion.

Some Have It Taped

Quite a few contractors, mostly on the West Coast, say they tape outside corners. But, as one from Indiana said, "We have a piece of sheet metal that’s formed at a 90-degree that we can put on in several ways. Some of them have tape affixed, so we can just tape them on. Others we either nail or screw on, and then we just fill it in with taping joint compound.” A Kansas contractor said much the same thing, and a Californian agreed, saying, “We clinch on cornerbeads and then just do the two or three coats of
taping mud. Sometimes we’ll put a little string of tape on if it’s a corner located in a high-impact area.”

Another Californian was of the same frame of mind: “On outside corners, we tape on cornerbeads using two different methods: nail-on cornerbeads, with joint tape over it, on wood frame construction. On any other type of construction, especially metal frame, we use the tape-on cornerbeads.”

In Arizona, a contractor says they “put on the cornerbead and tape it with tape and mud. Other than installing the cornerbeads the correct way, it’s a no-brainer.”

“Outside, we use self-adhering mesh tape,” says a Colorado contractor. “We just pull it off the roll and it sticks right to the cornerbead and the wall as we move down the surface of the cornerbead.”

In Oregon, “the tapers clinch on the cornerbeads with a tool, and then they mud it and apply fiberglass tape so it’s ready for paint,” says one contractor there.

“On an outside corner we primarily clinch on cornerbead,” explains an Idaho contractor. “We don’t use any tape-on cornerbeads. In a soffit situation, we like to clinch it on, look at it and make sure it’s straight. If we need to do anything with it, we’ll pass a line to follow so we can make the straightest possible corner. And after we clinch that on, we also paper-tape it. We will run a bazooka down there and stick a roll of tape on there and tape that cornerbead on, so we don’t experience any hairline cracking. We also apply tape to all our stand-ups. We’ll clinch cornerbeads on, then we’ll tape over that edge, and then we’ll cover it like a normal corner.”

“With tape-on cornerbeads,” says a Washington taper, “the guys run a bead of mud on each side of the corner, put the cornerbead on, wipe it down and then after that, they double it, finish it, sand it down, touch it up and that’s it.”

Others Have It Clinched

There were those contractors, however, mainly from the East, who never tape corners, as this Kentucky man makes
It is reassuring that the tapers know all the angles and aren’t cutting any corners.

clear: “We put a bead on the corners. We don’t tape them.”

From Texas we hear the following: “We put metal cornerbead on the corner and then mud it in. We don’t tape but float it in with a 6-inch knife and floating compound. We put the cornerbead in with the crimper, and then apply the mud. All the holes along the edge grip the mud well, making tape redundant.”

“In any normal drywall condition,” agrees a Virginian, “we use standard drywall bead or metal cornerbead and either screw or clinch it onto the corner. And then it’s just the taping process after that. By that I mean we usually float the drywall mud into the corner. Unless we’re into something like a veneer plaster condition, we wouldn’t normally do anything special with the corner or tape it. A lot depends on our foreman as well. If there’s an exposed corner that will be prone to traffic damage or cracking in a harsh environment, we’ll screw that cornerbead off. We might also tape a flange, but in reality it’s usually an additional step that doesn’t really happen.”

“We normally use cornerbeads and don’t tape it,” is the verdict from a North Carolinian. “We plant the mud and then put on the cornerbead,” agrees a Californian. “Ninety-nine percent of the time, we use metal cornerbeads and spackle,” says a contractor from New York. “Seventy-five percent of the time we crimp it on, using a crimper. And twenty-five percent of the time, we may screw it on, depending on the backing.”

His neighbor, a man from New Jersey, agrees, saying, “We tape inside corners and use cornerbead on outside corners.”

A contractor from Illinois had a bit more to say. “We either crimp on the cornerbead for metal studs or nail on a cornerbead if it’s wood. We then use a joint compound for the base coat and a Plus-
3 type material for the second coat. When United States Gypsum Co. first came out with their Plus-3 product for all the coats, we found it wasn’t strong enough. So we use either Durabond or joint compound as a first coat, and then use the Plus-3 to finish it. That applies to any of the lighter products, whether USG’s or another company’s. Vinyl beads have been out a long time and we’ve never used them, but I’m considering doing so—the ones that are applied with taping compound rather than crimping them on. I recently heard some contractors talking about how much they liked putting on the bead with mud and then finishing it.”

**Knowing All the Angles**

As for the inside corners, or angles, a contractor from Idaho stated, “We have two methods. The automatic taper or bazooka is one. The other is similar to a wet-tape banjo, only it’s strapped around your waist. The tape is pulled out with a joint compound on one side of it. Many people can’t run a bazooka very efficiently—they haven’t been trained on it, so the second method is simpler and less trying for them.”

Others specifying bazookas included a taper from Indiana: “On the inside corners there are various ways we do it. There’s a roller type of a head that goes on a pole, and we apply the tape in various ways, as with a flat area. We do it by hand or with a bazooka, depending on the project. We lay the tape in the corner and roll the roller, which has a metal casting with a roller in each direction, down the inside corner.”

“We tape them with a bazooka or taping tool,” says an Iowan. “We make sure the tape is neither too long for the corner intersection where the ceiling and the wall meet, nor too short. We want it rolled in and smoothed out properly.”

In Kentucky, a taper says, “We use tape with a bazooka and wipe it down with a roller, plow and mud over them.”

For an Idaho contractor, bazookas have their limitations: “With a 90-degree corner, we will use an automatic taping tool. Bring that roller in, glaze it and then apply another coat. Off-angle corners, of course, we don’t run through a gun but do by hand. The product we use gives a good, off-angle corner with a nice
straight line.”

There are those who mud the corners themselves, such as a Maine man who says, “We run the joint compound on each side of the corner, put in the paper tape, wipe it clean and make sure we leave some mud behind it. And then we bury one side, let it dry and then do the other side.”

“We put the mud in first and then the joint tape,” echoes a Maryland taper, “lay that down and then come back with a couple of coats. We have used beads on inside corners, or rather a vinyl-backed tape that’s actually a one-coat system, which has received mixed reviews from those using it.”

Doing it the same way is a contractor from South Carolina: “We just lay a bed of mud in the corners, and then use regular paper tape off a roll, creasing the tape, laying it in and down the corner and then letting it dry. There are a couple of different products out on the market now to put the mud in the corner. Each individual product has its place and its use. But for overall use, paper tape on inside corners will give you the best job, if done properly. That’s the key.”

A New Jersey taper agrees: “We handle inside corners like any other joint, except that we crease the tape in half and then put it in the corner. There’s no adhesive on the tape. It’s a paper tape with a crease in the middle. We fill the joint with spackle compound, imbed the tape in it, wedging it into the corner, and then put another layer of mud over that. When it dries, we add a second layer of mud.”

Applying compound to the tape itself is a contractor from North Carolina: “We use paper tape on the angles. We put a little bit of joint compound on the back of it, bend it, stick it on the wall and smooth it out.”

A taper in Colorado prefers to “use paper tape that comes out of the taping gun with the mud compound already on the backside.”

Offering words of advice about mud is a taper from Florida, who points out, “We make sure the mud is creamy, not straight out of a bucket or a box. We make it like whipped cream.”

“We go down each side of the corner...
with a taping knife,” concludes a Texan, “and then crease the center of the tape before applying it in the corner. Then we use a taping knife to wipe down one side, making sure the corner is square. Then we wipe down the other side, making sure it is good and square. And that’s all.”

It’s a testament to man's inventiveness that so many different products, techniques and preferences can exist for such a simple action. Whichever method is used, it is reassuring that the tapers know all the angles and aren’t cutting any corners.

About the Author
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