

## SHEETROCK BACK BLOCKS

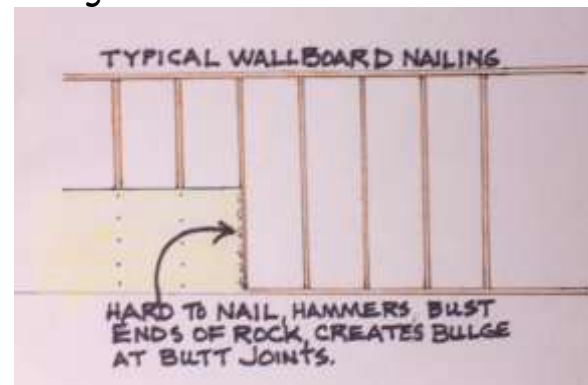
Using back blocks is a wallboard procedure I have been using for over 25 years, and I still have drywallers question this procedure until they use it, then they are sold forever. A drywaller in Austin Texas showed me this in 1978 and of course I was skeptical but after the first few sheets, I saw definite improvement in speed and quality.

After we put the slick coat on for the texture to be blown, I was sold forever. I always had butt-crowns no matter how careful I was taping, first float, second float and slick coat. It was because of the bulges that we got when we were nailing to a very small  $\frac{3}{4}$ " edge of a stud, and that's only if your rock hits dead center, and this seldom happens. The ever ending problem of a stud being off by  $\frac{3}{4}$ " and we had to saw off  $\frac{3}{4}$ " of rock off the end.

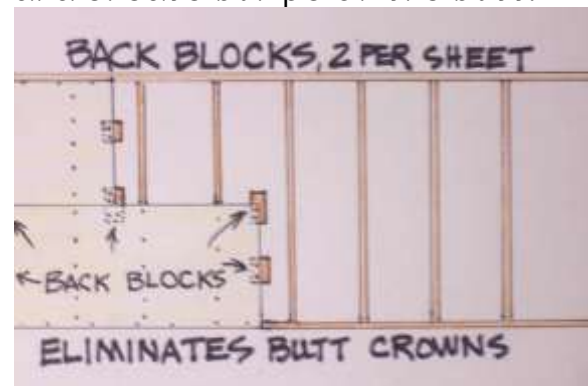
The next day we increased our hanging production by about 30%. Unbelievable, I know it was the extra time spent nailing the butt joints and trying to make the butts meet on the studs. I was amazed at the ease of the back block installation and how they improved the flatness of the butts. I was sold.

I hear all kinds of arguments about this, 1x4's or 2x4's cost too much (scrap), takes too much time and a bunch of other hearsay. They are all a bunch of

bull, because I know what I can do and I know what they are doing. I see them spending more time nailing a butt than we do screwing off a full sheet. You absolutely cannot hang more rock nailing butts to a stud than someone using back blocks. No way. You cannot get absolutely flat butts when you nail butts to a half a stud, you can only do this using back blocks.



This is typical rock installation. Busted rock on the ends, nails at an angle, heads sticking out and the busted ends naturally bulge and create bumps on the butt.



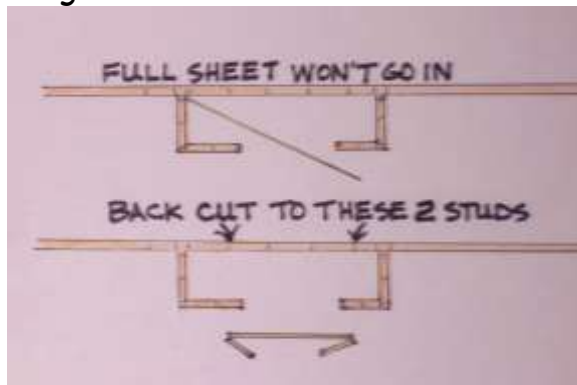
**This is back block installation. All you need to put is two screws on each block.**

I can install two back blocks while other rockers are thinking

about how they are going to screw or nail to a stud that the rock is only hitting on about a ¼" of edge, or worse when a sheet of rock covers the stud and he has to pull it and cut off a ½" piece of the end.

We just hung two sheets of rock while he is getting this done.

I have never had anyone go back to butt nailing rock after using back blocks, no one. It is absolutely to code (less than 22½" of butt span) and is stronger (and it is flush) than a sheet butt nailed or screwed and nearly all of the fasteners have broken the paper and created a bulge at the butt.



Now I know if you have hung a lot of rock you have been in this situation. You have a 8' closet and 4' opening and a full sheet won't go in. As the drawing shows, measure to the center of the closest end stud, then cut the **back** of the rock paper, break the rock, leaving the white paper and fold the two ends, don't break them off, and then the 3 folded pieces will go in the closet as one piece. After you get it in, unfold the ends, nail it on and you will not see where you

back cut it and you will not have a butt joint to contend with.

Another item you might consider is that when you are stocking rock to a wall you want to make sure the wall is solid and that the stack (if it's 4' rock) is about 4" from the wall at the bottom, and keep the bottoms kicked up to the last sheet, tight.

I saw, about 3 years ago, some delivery people stack 80 sheets of rock to a wall and when they finished the last of the rock was at about 450. It had the studs bent about 2" and was about to push them out of the wall. We restacked it.

This is a small part of drywall construction. Drywall is a lot more complicated than a lot of contractors think it is. There is not a lot of difference between a really good auto body repairman and a drywaller that can use hand tools. One is working with metal and the other is working with gypsum and paper. Both have the same objective, to get a smooth finish on a joint or a dent that no one can see. Go to a wall where they have butt nailed to studs and shine a light down the wall, as close as you can get to the wall, and you will see every butt joint. Then next time you hang and finish rock, try the back blocks, you'll see the difference.

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Bob Johnston, carpenter

