

Out of Sight

How to conceal seams to make a siding job shine

By Professional Remodeler Staff

High-end clothing, business strategies, and vinyl siding share one important quality: No one wants the seams to show.

In vinyl siding, those seams not only detract from a home's appearance, they can also open up and create a shadowing effect, pulling the siding off the house, experts say.

Conversely, a project with no seams, "makes my job shine," notes Ed Ladeuceur, owner of StormTite Home Improvement, in Warwick, R.I. Continuous lines are a selling point with many homeowners, he adds.

Luckily, with a little forethought, siding seams can be minimized. Here are a few useful tips for hiding unwanted lines.

- **Use longer lengths:** Years ago manufacturers began producing longer panels to give contractors more leverage. Selecting 16-foot pieces when possible, rather than 12-foot, can eliminate a full 50 percent of the seams—and 25-foot is even better.

"It doesn't work on every house, but where it does, that often sells the job," says Jason Kersch, sales manager at Major Homes,

in Flushing, N.Y. He notes that about one out of five of his company's vinyl siding jobs use 25-foot panels.

- **Consider sight lines:** Visualize where people will look from auto or on foot. For a clean, crisp effect that maximizes the aesthetic of new siding, make the front of the house as seamless as possible. Ditto areas visible from a deck. Instead, locate seams where people won't see them, typically the side of the home. That way, installers can arrange the overlap so that the shadow line can't be seen from the front.

- **Plan the layout:** Think ahead to take advantage of windows, doors, and other wall interruptions to conceal seams. Downspouts are useful in this regard, so is shrubbery since seams can be hidden behind bushes.

- **Create a design:** On a two-story house that's 30 feet or wider in front, design a decorative break in the center or between first- and second-floor windows using vertical rather than horizontal panels. This shortens the horizontal runs so that they can be covered without creating a seam.

- **Beware of patterns:** Try to avoid having laps too close together or in a step pattern on the wall. Any pattern tends to draw the eye to the laps rather than the overall home. "A better-quality panel will help to eliminate cupping or oil canning on walls that have imperfections in the framing of the structure," says Dave Hurst, owner of Hurst Exteriors, in Denver, Pa.

- **Combine Tactics:** With good planning, you can eliminate seams entirely on the front of a small house by choosing longer panels or by combining 12- and 16-foot lengths. Additionally, installers can use products designed to eliminate laps, such as foam-backed siding, which can drastically reduce the number of noticeable seams, or polypropylene shakes and shingles. **PR**

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Installer's friend: Bushes and windows provide a great way to minimize the appearance of siding seams.