

OPEN-BACKED PANELLING GUIDE

What it is and how to set-out and install



WHAT IS OPEN-BACKED PANELLING?

Open-Backed panels are sheets of MDF with squares or rectangles cut out. They're glued to a flat smooth surface. Once painted they take on the appearance of solid wood recessed panelling. The results are very realistic but with several major advantages over solid wooden panelling.

- Cost savings compared with traditional wood panelling.
- Quicker to install - many rooms can be done in a day.
- It's only 9mm thick.
- Easy to decorate, and to redecorate when a makeover is required.
- Won't expand and contract unlike traditional timber.



What if my walls are in poor condition?

Walls can be repaired or re-plastered prior to panelling but you may find it easier and cheaper to simply line them with thin MDF bonded to the wall or, if they are very uneven, batten the wall first and dry line with plasterboard/9mm MDF. Consult a reputable builder/handyman if you are in any doubt as to what you need and always ensure that any damp has been eradicated so that the walls are dry before panelling.

Note

Lining is only necessary if the walls are in poor condition as normally the Open-Backed panels can be glued directly to the plastered surface.

Image

Shows a 4mm MDF lined wall, lined prior to installing short panelling and deep rebated dado rail.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Skirting Boards

Can I retain my existing skirting?

Yes, most types of skirtings, particularly in older properties, have a bit of a horizontal “ledge” at the top for the 9mm thick panels to sit on. If you have “Bullnose” type skirtings with a rounded top then this won’t work so you might consider replacing the skirting with one that is more in keeping with the panelling (Bullnose is a more contemporary design).

Kitchens and Bathrooms

Can I use the panels in these rooms?

Yes, we use only the best quality moisture resistant MDF made in the British Isles. It is suitable for the humidity to be found in these rooms as long as the panelling is painted using a good quality eggshell paint (or paints specifically intended for kitchens and bathrooms). Apply good basic design principles such as ensuring that the panels do not “sit” in pools of water. Leave a 10mm gap between the floor and any panels (this will be hidden behind the skirting) and if panelling down to the top of a bath, basin or worktop ensure that the silicon sealant slopes away from the wall.



COMMON QUESTIONS

Framing Strips.

What are they and why do I need them?

When using our Open Backed designs Framing Strips can be used along with offcuts from the panels in the following ways:

1. They can be used to complete the end of a run (i.e. the last vertical rail).
2. When working from both ends towards the middle of a run a framing strip is sometimes needed when adapting the centre panel/s (see section "Installing & Setting Out").
3. With the short panelling Framing Strips are required to complete the bottom rail.
4. They can be used to pack out small gaps if an exact number of panels does not quite make up the total run length. Use either end to maintain symmetry.
5. They come in handy for packing out skirtings, picture rails etc.

As a rule of thumb we suggest one Framing Strip per run of panels. A run is defined as a length of panelling so a wall with a doorway in the centre would count as two runs. N.B. Allow for the bottom rails in addition to this if you are using our Short designs.

Use Framing Strips (shown here in purple) to 'close off' or frame any adapted sections of all of our Open Backed designs and for the bottom rails on the short designs.

Framing Strips (*shown here in purple*)



INSTALLING & SETTING OUT TIPS

Basic Principle

Symmetry is key.

Symmetry is essential when deciding how to set out your panelling. First establish the centre of each run and work out from there towards the ends or, alternatively, from the ends back towards the centre - whichever works out best with the panel design you are using and taking into consideration location of sockets etc. It is often worth just loosely laying them against the wall in question to see how they look and to check whether it is better to work out from the centre of the run or back towards it.

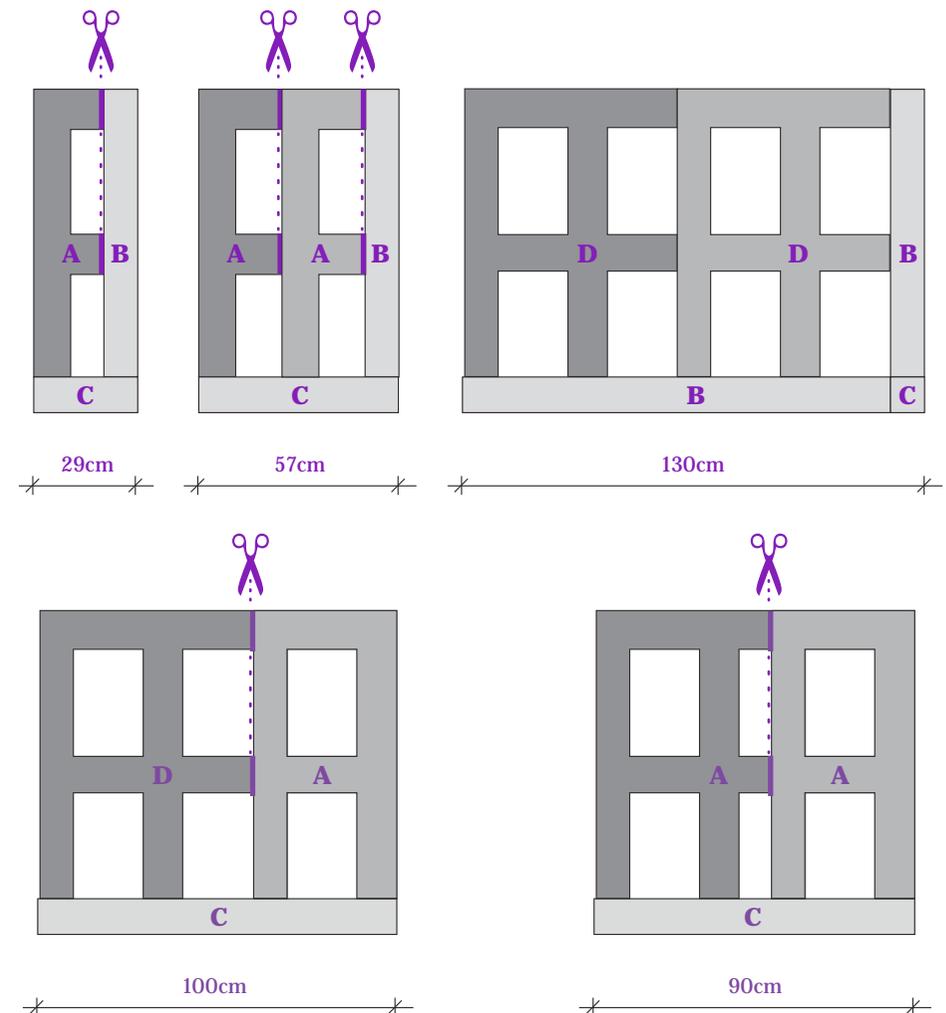
Inevitably there will be some cutting down of a panel or two on each run. Maintain the symmetry and it will be pleasing to the eye. Once it has been decorated everything will merge and the reduced/enlarged panels will blend in.

Here are some examples:

- A. **Cut down panel (cuts shown in purple)**
- B. **Full length Framing Strip (80cm-120cm)**
- C. **Cut down Framing Strip**
- D. **Full size panel with no cuts**

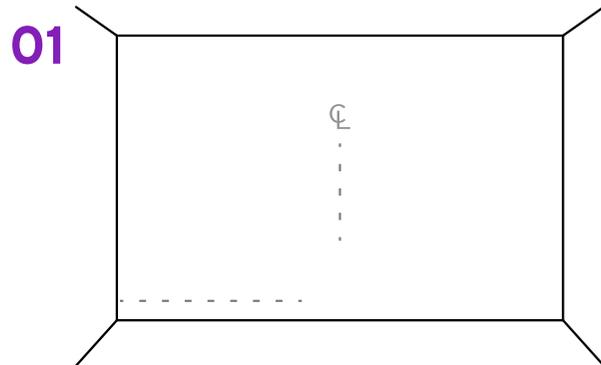
Note:

The bottom run of framing strips will only be required if Short panels are used. The other types already have the bottom rail as an integral part of the panel.

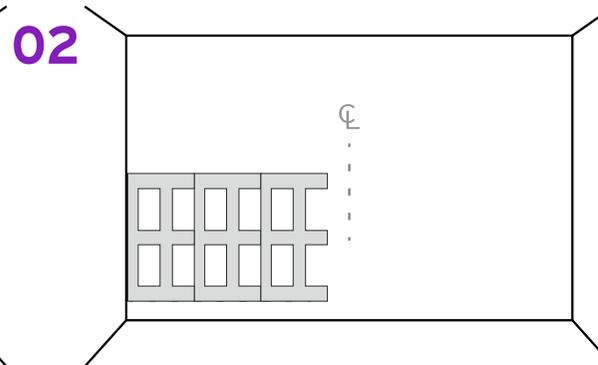


INSTALLING & SETTING OUT TIPS

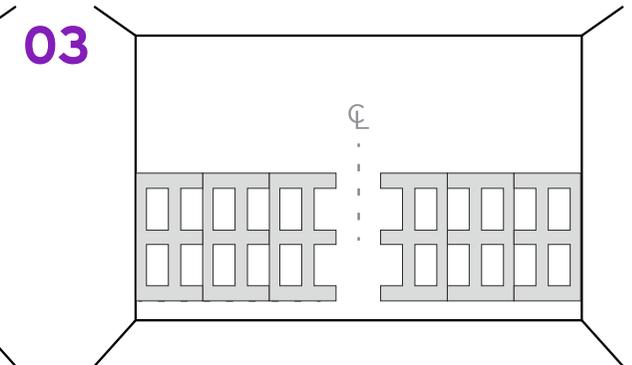
Example:
Tall panels with new skirtings.



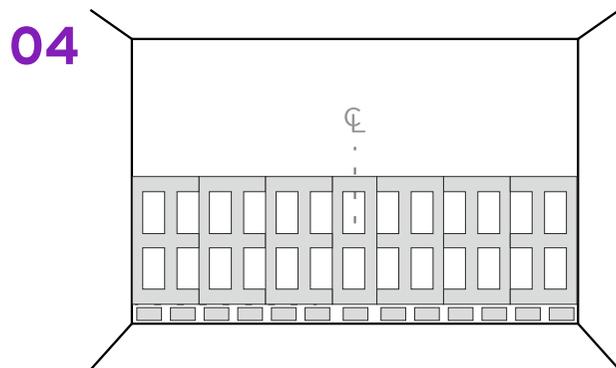
Establish the centre of the wall and height of skirting and mark on the wall.



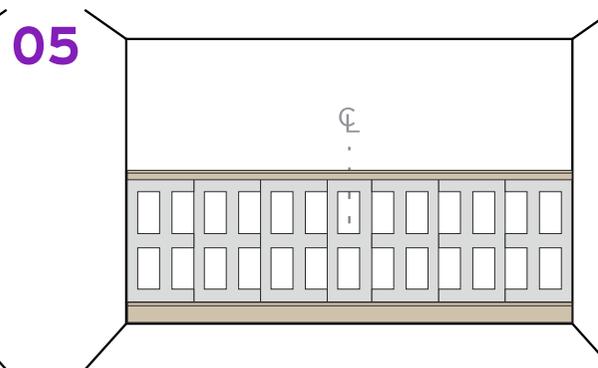
Position panels 10mm below skirting line, work towards the centre. Pin corners to ensure they don't slip whilst drying.



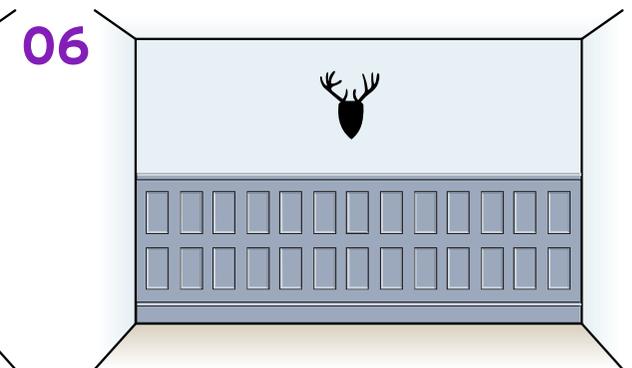
Work from opposite side checking that top edges will line up with each other.



Establish size of resulting centre panel, adjust accordingly. Use offcuts/Framing Strips to pack out for skirting.



Fit Dado and Skirting boards. Sand and fine-surface fill as required and remove (or hammer home) any pins used.



Decorate. Stand back. Admire!

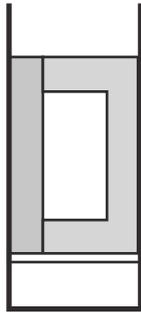
INSTALLING & SETTING OUT TIPS

Example:

Using half-height panelling on various run lengths

45cm run

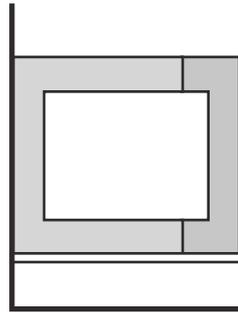
A Framing Strip (13cm wide) forms one side and a panel is cut down to fill the remaining space (32cm).



85cm run

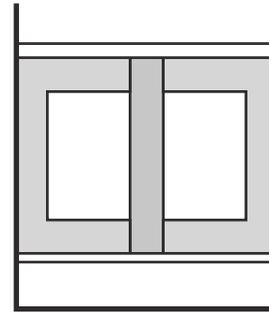
One whole panel (60cm) is used for one side and another is cut down to fill the remaining space (25cm)

For wider runs use a divider as shown in the next diagram otherwise the square starts to look too squat.



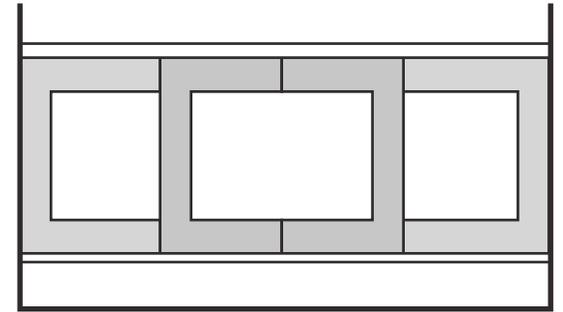
100cm run

Two panels have been cut down to meet a Framing Strip centrally placed as a divider.



215cm run

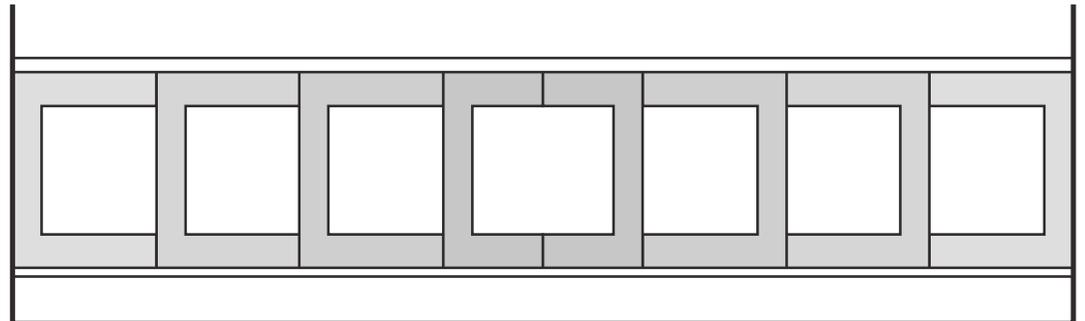
Two whole panels have been placed alongside two panels cut down to fill the remaining space.



443cm run

Three whole panels have been placed either side of two panels cut down to fill the centre (which in this case is 10cm wider than a whole panel). The alternative would be to use seven whole panels (plus one Framing Strip), and then pack out the 5cm gaps either end using cut down slithers of a Framing Strip. This would produce a slightly wider vertical rail in each corner but symmetry is maintained.

Note: For runs less than 25cm, no squares, use plain 9mm MDF and paint in same colour as panels to maintain continuity.



INSTALLING & SETTING OUT TIPS

Working with Internal and external corners

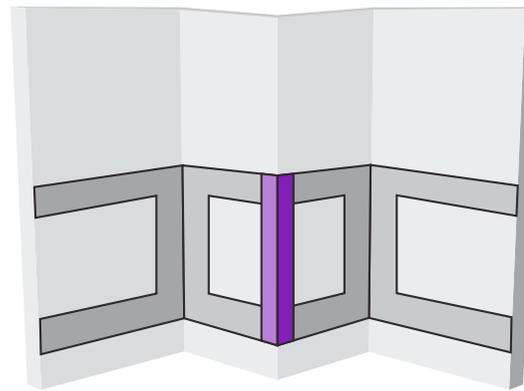
The diagrams (right) illustrate two alternative ways of dealing with corners. Here half-height panels are shown on an external corner but the same principles can be applied to any of our Open Backed designs and indeed internal corners can be treated the same way. It will depend on each individual situation as to which works best

Tip

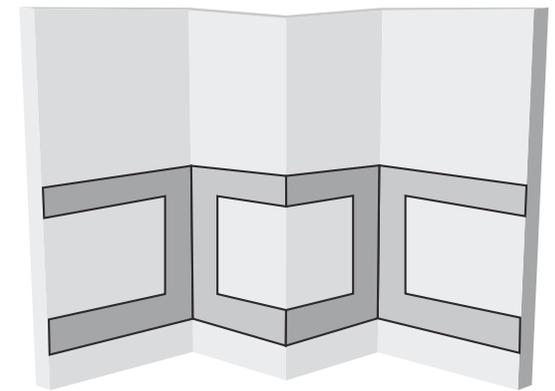
Drawing pencil lines on the wall and then standing back to see what looks best!

Note:

With option A two framing strips (coloured purple) will be required.



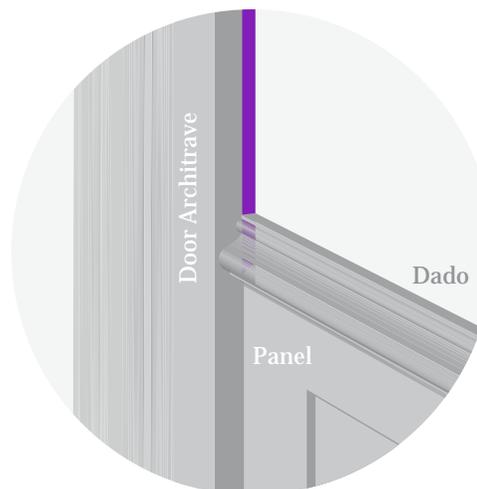
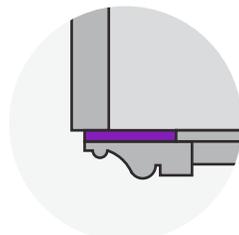
Option A



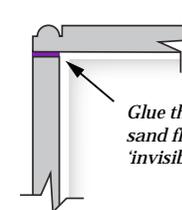
Option B

Although the panels are only 9mm thick it is sometimes necessary to pack out architraves so that the panels and dado run neatly into them. This can easily be done using 9mm thick planed stripwood (available from a DIY store or builder's merchant) and shown here in purple. A quicker alternative solution could be to chamfer back the dado to meet the corner of the architrave.

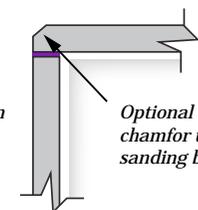
Purple
9mm thick packing
stripwood



With the xxx design the treatment of corners is more straightforward as there are no recessed panels to worry about. For the detailing of the corner itself see the diagram below.



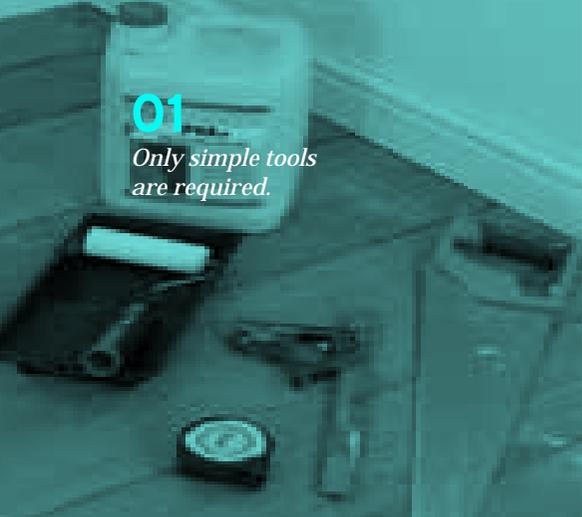
With a bead



Square edge

01

Only simple tools are required.



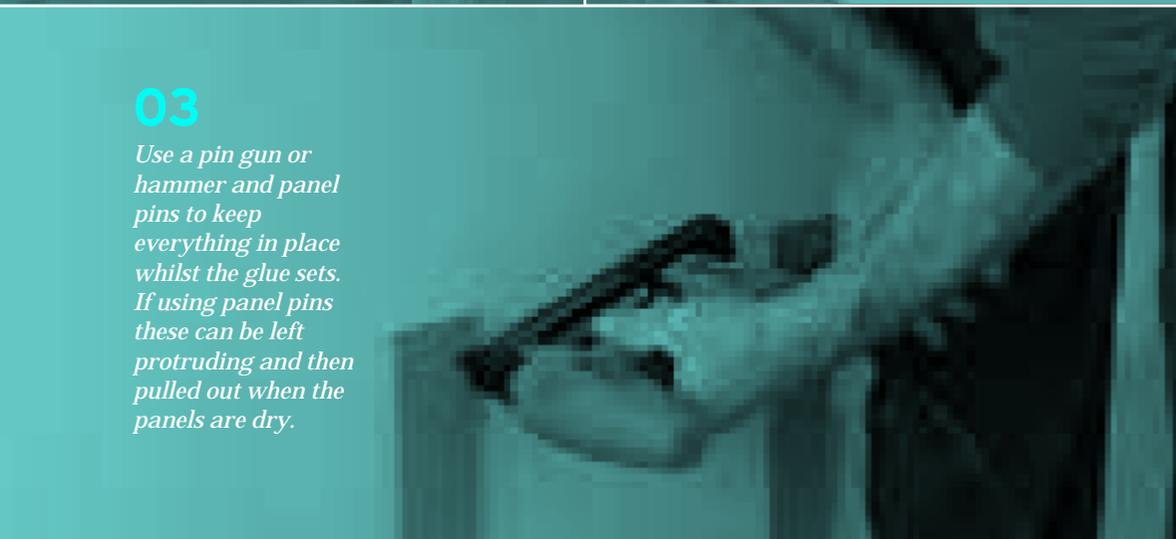
02

Apply a generous coating of PVA glue.



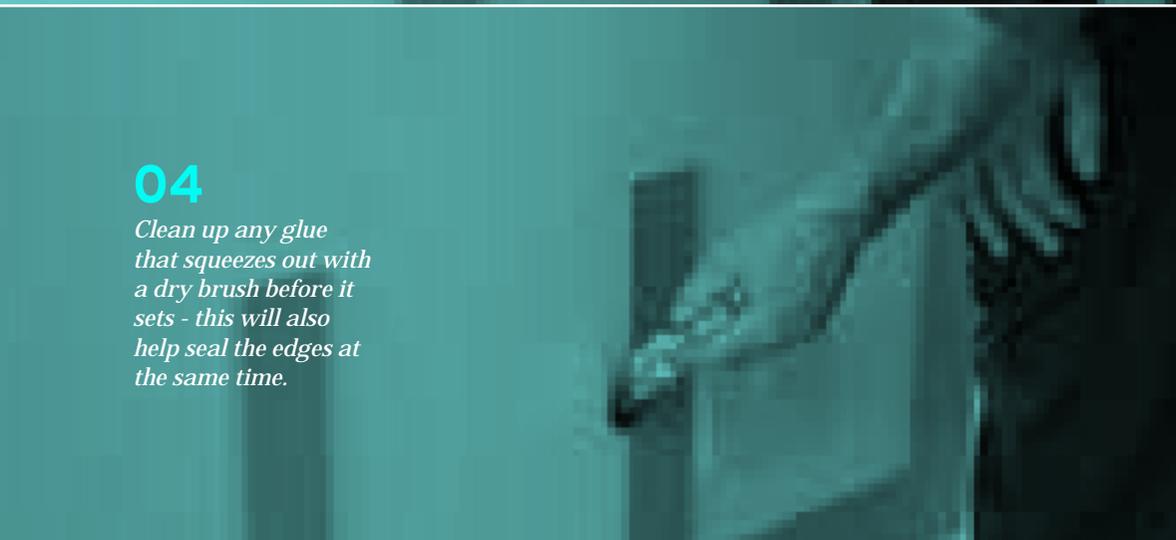
03

Use a pin gun or hammer and panel pins to keep everything in place whilst the glue sets. If using panel pins these can be left protruding and then pulled out when the panels are dry.



04

Clean up any glue that squeezes out with a dry brush before it sets - this will also help seal the edges at the same time.



01

Cut paneling if objects cannot easily be moved.



02

Use Decorators Caulk to fill any gaps prior to decorating.



Gluing the panels and dealing with sockets.

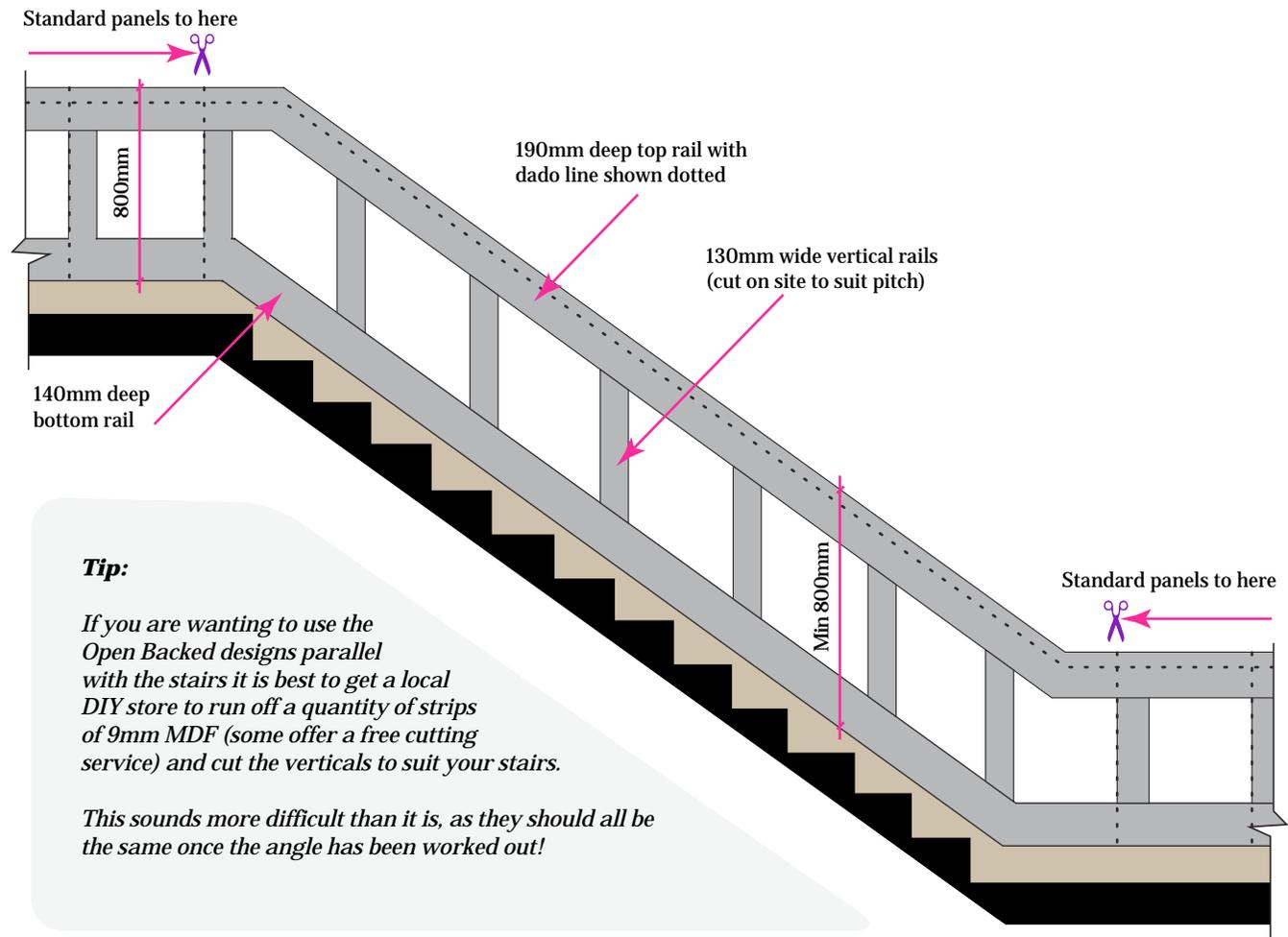
Use a panel adhesive for Solid Backed designs (No-Nails™ or Gripfill™). A bead all round the perimeter 2cm in from the edge and then a zig zag across the rest. However, with our Open Backed panels, it is important to get a tighter fit against the wall so we recommend a generous coating of PVA glue for these. Use a mini roller and ensure that it is fully coated. Press panel to the wall, secure (either temporarily or permanently) with pins in the corners to hold it whilst the adhesive sets and go around the edges with a dry brush to mop up any glue that squeezes out - this will effectively seal the edges at the same time.

INSTALLING & SETTING OUT TIPS

Staircases

To panel or not to panel?

A common question is 'how can the staircase be paneled when panelling in a hallway'. As every staircase angle varies it's not possible to produce a pre-cut panel but there are options. One alternative is to panel to ceiling height and simply run it into the stairs as was commonly done with traditional wood panelling (see below). You could do this with any of our panel designs.





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