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## Tack Strips

Carpet installation has evolved in many ways over the years, from hand-sewing seams, to the use of thermoplastic seaming tapes, radio-wave activated seaming tapes. All new techniques that come about are put to the test, and either used by the installer or rejected by the installation community all together.

The use of tack strips was one of the first major breakthrough innovations that changed the way carpet is installed. Prior to the availability of tack strip, carpet was loose laid or turned and tucked, then tacked to the floor to hold the carpet in place. Hence, the term "tackless" came into vogue.

Tack strip was invented by Ray Roberts, founder of the Roberts brand floor covering companies in the 1930's. Ray got the idea for the tack strip from watching his wife hang curtains over a strip of wood with nails protruding from the backside. The nails were angled slightly upward so the curtains would not fall off. Ray thought that if he used a similar strip of wood around the perimeter of a room, the carpet could attach to this strip and then be stretched from wall to wall and be held firmly in place. Tack strip has evolved over the years, but the basic design is still the same.

Today's tack strips vary in width, length, and pin height, anchoring nail and material construction. The first consideration for tack strip installation is the width, the standard or regular is 7/8 inch wide with two rows of pins; it is the most economical strip available and is routinely used in residential applications.

The most widely used type of tack strip is the Extra Wide model, which is a full 1 inch wide with two rows of pins. Front and back rows of pins are moved farther apart for extra strength and easier hooking to the carpets backing. The most common use of this type strip is residential and light commercial where tack strip may be needed.

The Tri-Tack tack strip was introduced in the mid-1990's. Tri-Tack is a full 1 ¼ inch wide and has three rows of pins. The Tri-Tack should be used in residential applications, especially if the length or width of the installation is 30 feet and more.

The Commercial tack strip is a full 1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inch wide, with three rows of pins. Anchoring nails are positioned closer to wall to prevent the strip from lifting during heavy stretching.

Aluminum tack strips are an alternative when a wood tack strip cannot be used. These tack strips can be nailed or glued down to the substrate. The aluminum strip has approximately 240 pins over a four foot length that is 1/8 inch tall.

The tack strip anchoring nail will be job specific. The regular wood nail is a <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inch long ring shank to be used on standard wood sub floors. The heavy duty nail is a one inch long, ring shank; it is to be used when extra holding power is needed over a wood floor, including floors with an added layer of underlayment.

The regular concrete anchor nail is 11/16 inch, hardened shank nail to be used on most concrete floors. The heavy duty concrete nail is a 5/8 inch hardened shank nail, and is to be used on extremely dense concrete or an older concrete substrate. The dual-purpose nail will work on wood as well as concrete. It has an 11/16 inch long hardened shank nail with rings on the shank.



The next consideration when choosing a tack strip is the pin height. Tack strip pin height has been classified for years using an alpha code. Because all carpet constructions cannot be installed using the same pin height, thought must be given to the carpet's backing type and pile yarn height, as well as tufting construction. Some carpet constructions will install better over a longer tack strip pin, and other styles, such as short pile carpet constructions, will require the use of a shorter tack strip pin. Below is a listing of tack strip models specified by an ALPHA code used to identify the pin height:

- C-pin strip has a pin that is 1/4 inch in height designed to be used on carpets with rough or thick backings.
- E-pin strip has a pin that is 7/32 inch in height. This tack strip is the most commonly used tack strip, and is considered the standard tack strip model.
- D-pin strip has a pin with a height of 3/16 inch. This tack strip should be used for carpets with short, dense pile to avoid pins showing through the carpets face.
- J-pin strip has a pin that is 5/32 inch in height. This tack strip should be used with very thin carpets, or carpets with thin backings.

Tack strips are also coded for pin height numerically. The main issue to take into account about tack strip pin height is to make sure that the pin is long enough to fully grab the primary backing without protruding through the tufts when pressure is applied.

As in all trades, the proper use of the correct products makes the job easier to do, and helps insure that the consumer gets a quality installation that will last. This means that you can't cut corners when it comes to tack strip selection. Take time to consider the product to be installed, and the proper application of the tack strips. Use the right tools for the job.

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