

Walls and Floors

The tools for the job

To be able to work with images on your PC, you will need some specialist graphics editing software, such as Paint Shop Pro, Corel Draw or Photo Shop. There are others around, some of which are free or very cheap, and others, which are professional graphics packages, which are very expensive. To start with, you could even use with Paint tool that comes with Windows, but it's very restrictive.

For the following tutorials, we will assume that you are using Paint Shop Pro. You can get a free trial version of this tool from www.jasc.com, but it is a rather large download. You will also find Paint Shop Pro 8 or free, older versions on the cover mount CD's of many computer magazines.

If you are using a different program, you should be able to find the same commands quite easily by reading the help sections of your manual. Graphics packages differ greatly, but the terms and basic elements, which we will be using, should be pretty much similar.

You will need to know the basic editing techniques of 'Cut & Paste'. This is where you can cut parts of an image and place them within others. The help files on your paint program will explain how these work in great detail.

You might also like to check out some of the many great tutorials around the Internet for Paint Shop Pro, such as DisDatDesign. Other programs you are likely to need during these tutorials, such as HomeCrafter, will be discussed in great detail during the following lessons.

Getting Started

Floors are probably the easiest things that you can customise for your game manually, without the use of the Maxis tools you used earlier, such as Art Studio and Face Lift. With manual customisation, you are required to create and edit the images needed to your own style and design. Walls come next, and although there is a little more image editing skill required, they are also very easy to create and install into your game. Murals are also simple, and are actually made up of several separate wall designs, that when placed together, form a mural on the house wall to any size you choose to create.

We will discuss floors and murals in more detail in a later lesson. The first thing we are going to create for your game is your own, custom made wall. To do this you will need a graphics editing program, as discussed earlier. The only other application, which you will need, is the HomeCrafter program released by Maxis. This will actually turn your graphical creation into a working wall file that your game can use.

A later lesson in this section will cover HomeCrafter in great detail, but you will need to download and install the program in advance, from the Programs Page at The Sims Resource. Click this link to go to the page and download it. Once downloaded, open the program and install it to the default location. Before we start creating, you need to have an understanding of the basics of seamless images, which is what will now be explaining.

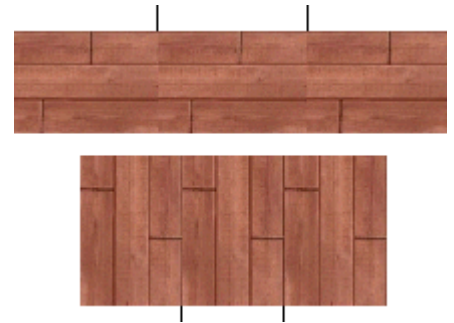
Step 1.

Seamless images

When creating a wall decoration you need consider the 'seamless joins' at each side of the pattern.

Just as real wallpaper does, you Sim creations need to be able to be placed side by side without any break in the pattern. This is known as a seamless edge.

In this image you can see the difference between a pattern that can be placed together seamlessly, and one that cannot. You can see the top image has colour differences between the joins (marked with black lines), which allow us to see where they were placed together. The bottom image blends perfectly.



There are many sources on the Internet for free images that you can use to make your creations. In theory, you could even scan samples of your own wallpaper into your PC and edit it to be useable in The Sims, making your Sims homes a replica of your own.

But you can also make your own seamless patterns from pictures or images that you already have, and might like to see in the game. I will provide you with the images you need to make your first wall.

Right click on each of the image links that follow and choose 'save target as'. Save the image file to your desktop or other folder, where you can find it quickly for the next step. You will need all 3 images.

[Image One](#) [Image Two](#) [Image Three](#)

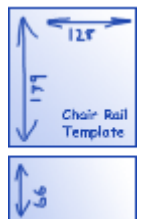
Step 2.

Creating your first wall

Note: This tutorial was written for an older version of Paint Shop Pro than is current, but all menu options used here are very basic, and should be the same. This tutorial will get you started on making walls with basic images. The original artwork for your future creations can be as elaborate as you can achieve!

The wall template

The HomeCrafter tool actually comes with its own tutorial, but that only explains the interface of the tool, and not how to actually make a new wall texture. You also get a few sample walls with the tool, as well as one important template image, which you will be using as a base for your first creation.



Lets take a look at that file now. Open up Paint Shop Pro, or your own graphics program. Open the file 'Blueprint_Wall.bmp' from your HomeCrafter folder. This can be found where you just installed HomeCrafter to. The default is C:\Program Files\Maxis\Home Crafter.

You should now be viewing a blueprint template of a wall. The entire image size is 128 pixels wide, by 240 pixels tall. This is the fixed size that any wall image you make must equal. If you make the image bigger or smaller, the HomeCrafter tool will force its size, and will distort the quality of your work. You should also only save your work as Windows Bitmap Images (.bmp) at 256 colours, as HomeCrafter will only work properly with this format.

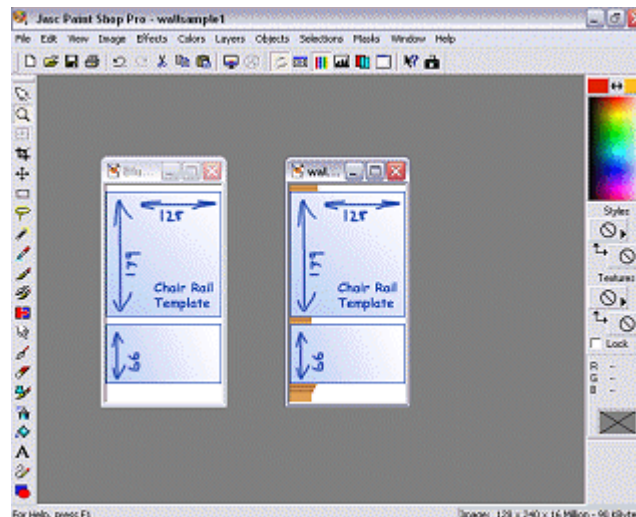
You will see that this template has areas for a kick board (or skirting board), a chair rail (or dado rail), and a picture rail at the top. You do not have to use these areas, but for the sake of the following tutorial we will. The only basic requirement for your wall design is that the image is this size.

Step 2.

You should already have your paint package open, and your 'Blueprint_Wall.bmp' file open, as explained at the end of the previous lesson.

As I just mentioned, we are going to use the kick board, chair and picture rails for our example. They can be any colour or effect that you like. If you take a look at some of the walls that came with your game, you will see examples of different wood effects and 'white paint' styles used throughout.

For this example wall, we are going to use a wood effect in traditional colour. We will start with the kick board. I have created an example for you to see just how these are made. At this point, open up the file 'wallsample1.jpg', that you downloaded from the previous lesson into your paint package. You should now be viewing the two files.



You will see that I have created a small section of the wood areas for you to see how they have been created. Now, chose the zoom tool on your paint package (magnifying glass on Paint Shop Pro, second icon down on the left hand side), and click on the brown kick board area on this new image that I have pre made. Keep zooming in on the kickboard until you are at something like 8 times zoom. You will see that by creating a few horizontal lines of different colour, you can create the illusion of shape.

When you come to make your own walls, play around with different colours and shades to make new shapes and effects of your own. You will soon see that by going from dark to light, and back again, gives the shape of a curve, which is what we have at the top of our kick board here.

Step 2 Cont.

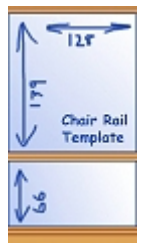
Now scroll up the image and you will see that the chair and picture rails have been done in exactly the same way. What you now need to do is cut these sample areas and paste them in to complete these areas of your wall.

I mentioned before that you would need to know the basics of 'cut and paste', but briefly, choose the 'selection tool' (In Paint Shop Pro, the 6th icon down on the left), and click and hold the mouse in the top left corner, dragging it out to the bottom right of the kick board area. Once you have the area you want highlighted, release the mouse and the area will be selected.

Be sure to have 'anti alias' turned off in the 'tool options' window, otherwise you will get blended white lines around your selection. Press CTRL C to copy it to memory, and then CTRL E to paste it as a new selection (or use your top menu again to choose 'Edit' and 'paste'. If you are having problems working these steps out, you will need to go back to your graphics programs' help documentation, or as I explained in the previous lesson, check out some of the online Paint Shop Pro tutorials.

Once you have done that you should end up with a blueprint wall file with complete kick boards, chair rail and picture frame, as seen in the example here.

We now need to fill in our top and bottom wall sections to complete the design. This is where the 'seamless images' come in that we discussed in an earlier lesson. The left and right edges of our wall must blend in when placed together in a row, just as real wallpaper does.



There are many resources scattered around the Internet for these type of background images, one of which you can find [here](#).

Step 3.

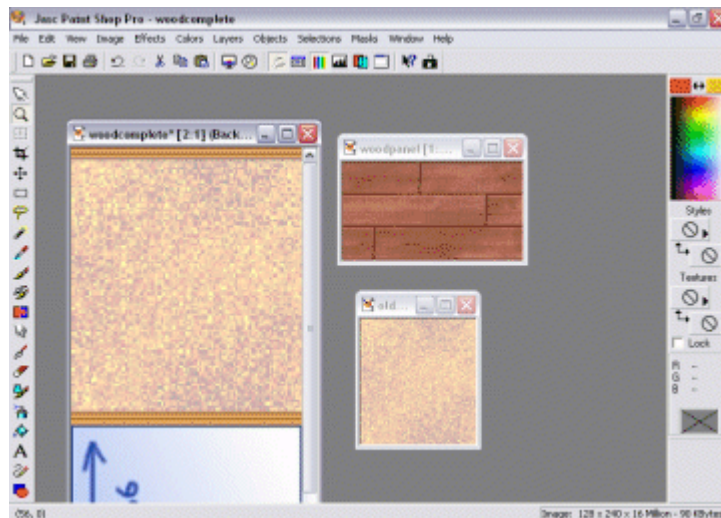
From a similar site I have selected 2 seamless images for you to use in this example. These are the other two images that you saved from an earlier tutorial, so you should open these up now in your graphics program. You should now be viewing your blueprint wall complete with wooden rails, and your 2 seamless pattern images.

Generally with wall designs of two differing textures, the darker area will be placed at the bottom, with the lighter area at the top. This seems to give a more pleasing affect to rooms to keep them more 'light and airy' rather than 'dark and dingy'. So we will be placing our wood panels at the bottom of our wall. Firstly though, we will place our lighter texture in the top.

Once Once As you can see, the images we have are the wrong size for our wall, so we will first have to stretch it to fit. You can see from our blueprint wall that the image needs to be 128 pixels wide, by 139 pixels tall. So, select our speckled image, and then resize it to those dimensions. In Paint Shop Pro, this is done by clicking on Image >> Resize.

Step 3 Cont.

Turn off 'Maintain aspect ratio' at the bottom of the box, and then change the 'Pixel Size' at the top to 128 by 139. Click OK, and your image will now be ready to paste into the blueprint.



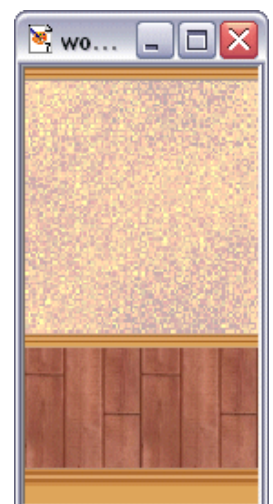
Copy the image (CTRL C) and then select your wall image. Choose Edit >> Paste >> As new selection, and position your textured area to cover the blueprint area at the top of the wall, fitting in perfectly between the chair and picture rails. Be careful to place the image centrally so they you don't have a blue line on either the left or right of the image, as this will break the 'seamless' pattern.

Now we have to deal with the wood panel. This is obviously way too big, but I think that we also need to change the rotation. For this wall, I'd like to see the panels running vertical, rather than horizontal, so we need to rotate it. In Paint Shop Pro, choose Image >> Rotate, In this window, choose 'Right orientation', and 90 Degrees. Click OK.

Now that we have our rotation right, we need to look at the size. Now I think that if we force this image into that area we have, the panels will look far too wide, so we would be better off placing 2 of those images into our wall section. We see by our blueprint that that this area needs to be 66 pixels tall, and the width of the image, which is 128 pixels. So lets make our wood panels half of that width, so that we can place 2 images in there.

Select your wood panel image, and using the same technique as before, resize it to 64 pixels wide, by 66 pixels high (Image >> Resize). Now copy the image to memory (CTRL C) and paste it as a new layer as before, on our new wall (Edit >> Paste >> As new selection).

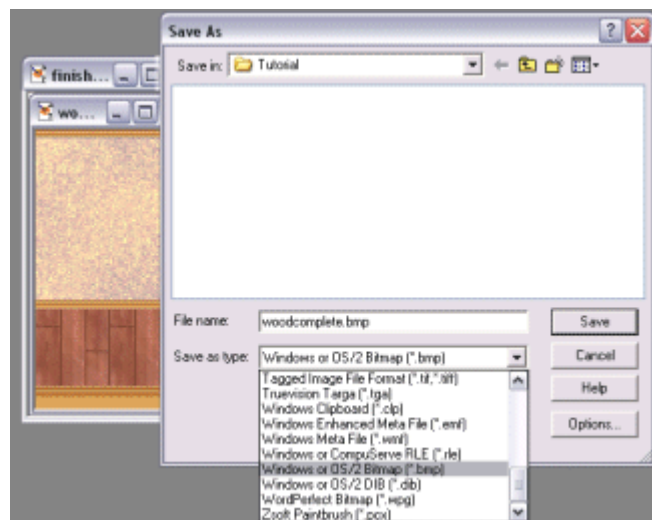
Put the image on the far left side of the bottom wall section, and then and then while the image is still in memory, paste it again, as another new selection. This time, match the image up with the right hand border, to fill the whole bottom section with our seamless wood panels.



Step 3 Cont.

You should now have your completed wall panel, and can see now how placing your 'seamless' image next to itself allows you to believe that we have one, long continuous wood pattern with no visible joins.

So there you have your wall, all ready to place into your game. First though, you need to make the image into a .wll file so that your game can use it, and this is covered in the next lesson of this subject, 'Using HomeCrafter'.



To be able to open this image in HomeCrafter, you need to save this wall as a Windows Bitmap Image. In Paint Shop Pro, close all of your unwanted images, and select your finished wall. Choose File >> Save As.

Give your wall file a name, and choose from the drop down box to 'save as type Windows or OS/2 Bitmap [*.bmp]', its probably about 4th up from the bottom of the list.

Save the file, and you are now ready to move on and build your wall for the game!

Step 4.

Using HomeCrafter

HomeCrafter is a Maxis tool that can create game useable wall and floor tiles from your own image creations. The exported game file is created to include the wall image at all 3 zoom levels used in the game, and at each of the rotational angles that you can build walls at.

We are going to start with the wall file that you should have just created and saved, following the previous lesson, "Creating your first wall". Load up HomeCrafter. The install does not create an icon in your Start bar, so you will need to find it by browsing to **C:\Program Files\Maxis\HomeCrafter**. Click the HomeCrafter.exe file to run it.

Step 4 Cont.

Once you have loaded up HomeCrafter and take a brief look at the interface. A tutorial is included with the HomeCrafter install that includes details of what each of these buttons will do. Most of this will be explained here in this tutorial though.



In the program, you will see a sample house from the game, which will demonstrate how your creations will look. On the left side is the control panel. You can zoom in and out of the house using the + and – buttons at the top of the control panel.

Once zoomed in, you can move the house view by clicking and holding your right mouse button in the house display. Move the mouse around to browse.

So let's start to build your wall file.

As wall mode is the default, click on the disk icon, second down in the navigation bar. Browse to, and open your finished wall .bmp file you created during the last lesson.

Once you have chosen it, you will see the wall texture in the control panel. You can actually load up multiple walls if you wish, and scroll through them with the up / down arrows to the right of the image.



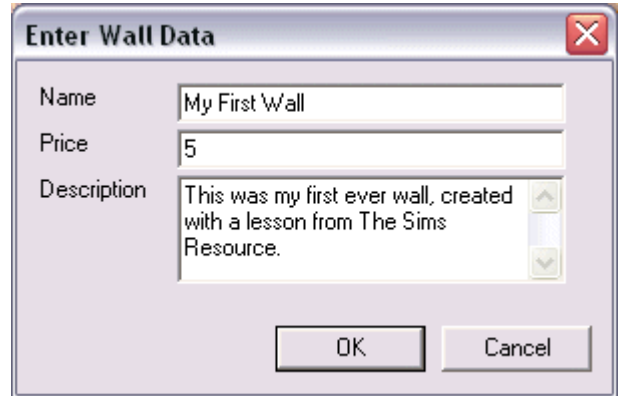
For now though, we only need this one, so go ahead and test the wall texture out in your sample house. Move the mouse over the undecorated walls and left click on them to paste your paper design up.

This is where you find out whether your pattern was created to be 'seamless'. You shouldn't have any lines or breaks in the pattern between wall sections. If your pattern runs seamlessly along a whole length of wall, you have a success!

Step 4 Cont.

Now we need to add a price and description to the wall file, which will be displayed in the game when you are browsing for a wall to use. To do this, click the large area at the bottom of the HomeCrafter window which says “*Click Here To Change*”.

In the window that pops up, edit your wall name, cost and description. Click OK to save the details and your new wall name and cost will be displayed at the bottom of HomeCrafter. Click it again if you wish to make any changes.



If you are happy with the way the wall looks, and the name, cost and description, then you are ready to build your wall file. The very bottom button of the navigation bar is the ‘EXIT’ or ‘QUIT’ button. Above that you will see the icon that allows you to ‘**Export**’ (a wall image pointing to a disk).

Click this, and save your new wall. The default folder that opens is the correct game folder for wall files, so you don’t need to navigate to anywhere else. Just give your wall file a name, and choose save.

Step 4 Cont.

Now You can now close HomeCrafter and load up your game. You should then see your wall in all its glory, just waiting to be placed into your game for your Sims' enjoyment!



Satisfying? It should be! You have just made your first user created item for **The Sims**. Now you can go ahead and create many more walls of your own design.

You can share it with your friends or post it on The Sims Resource for the whole community to download and enjoy! An earlier tutorial already explained just how to get your work posted at the site, so you might like to go back and have a read up, so that you can show off your work to the world! Congratulations!

Step 5.

Creating Floors

Next up... Floors! Even easier than walls, so be sure to continue to the next lesson.

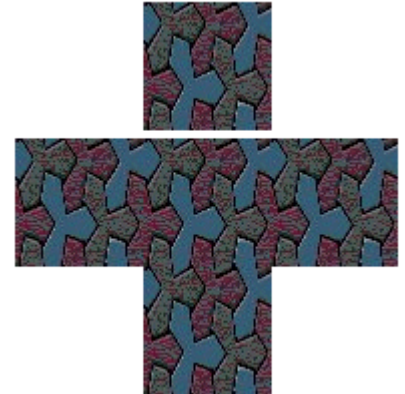
This tutorial will assume that you have completed the previous lessons for making a wall, and using HomeCrafter to put it into your game. Floors are even easier to make than walls, requiring a single image to create them. You can very easily make a new carpet or plain floor texture of any colour you like to personalise your Sims home, but creating new tiles and floor patterns can be fairly easy to do as well.

One difference between the seamless images used for walls, and those needed for floors, is that the image needs to 'tile' on all four sides, rather than just left and right. That's because all four sides of the floor tile will be placed against itself. The size of a floor tile is 64 x 64 pixels. There is no blueprint example for floors for obvious reasons.

Take a close look at the example.

You will see that this single tile can be placed against itself on all 4 sides, and it still makes up a seamless pattern.

Of course with tile effects, you can easily get around this seamless pattern problem by simply putting a coloured outline around the tile, forcing it to match up.

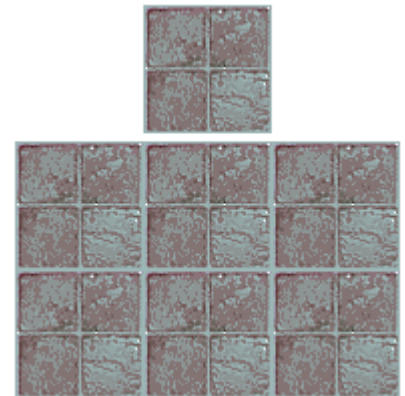


Here's an example image of such a tile. Notice how a single line border makes up a 'grout' effect between the tiles.

I have selected a basic floor tile pattern for you to use for our working example if you wish. You could of course make your own image file to use, or come back to the tutorial later and follow it again to make your very own creation.

As explained in the walls tutorial, you can also find some great resources on the Internet for 'tileable' images, but most have been exhausted for the purpose of making files to submit to this site, so chances are they won't be unique creations to you.

As with the walls tutorial, right mouse click this link and choose 'save as'. Put the file in your HomeCrafter folder.



Load up HomeCrafter again, as we will work through the subtle differences with creating floors. Below the blank wall image on the left, you will see two buttons. These switch between working with wall and floor tiles. Walls are the default, so you need to click the 'floor mode' icon. As before, click the load image button above the preview area.

Now browse to the sample floor file you saved from 2 steps ago (TSRfloortile.bmp). You will then see the preview of the floor tile ready to use in HomeCrafter.

As before with the walls, you can now place your floor tiles around the house to see what they will look like in the game.

There is also one other option that you can set with your floor creations. To make them more realistic in the game, you can change the volume setting of the Sims footsteps when they walk across your floor.



Below the preview image you will see 3 buttons. These select the footstep sounds between 3 volumes. The reason for this is so that floor tiles, wood flooring and carpets can all have a different sound effect. If a Sim walks from a tiled floor onto carpet, the footsteps will become quieter in the game.

Neat eh?

The last thing to go is click in the bottom area of HomeCrafter as you did with walls, to change the title, description and cost of your new floor. You can then save the floor into the 'floors' folder in your game files, but HomeCrafter will select that for you as a default. Load the game up, and check out your new creation!