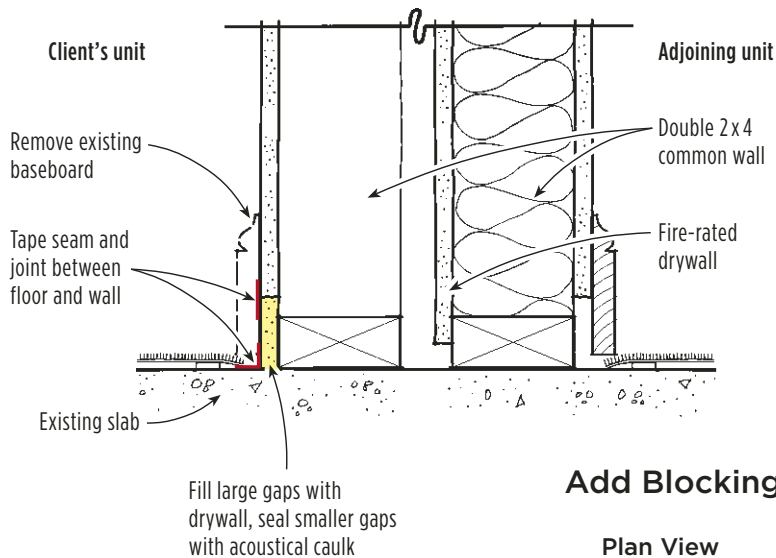


# Q&A

## Q. Fixing a Noisy Condo

I'm renovating a condominium that shares a wall with the adjoining unit. Sound from the neighboring unit — the ringing telephone, the dishwasher, and especially the TV — travels right through the double 2x4 common wall, which has fire-rated drywall sheathing on one of the interior surfaces. Only the neighboring wall has fiberglass batt insulation, and as far as I know, the two walls do not touch. The condo is on a slab foundation. Is there any way to reduce the sound transmission through this wall?

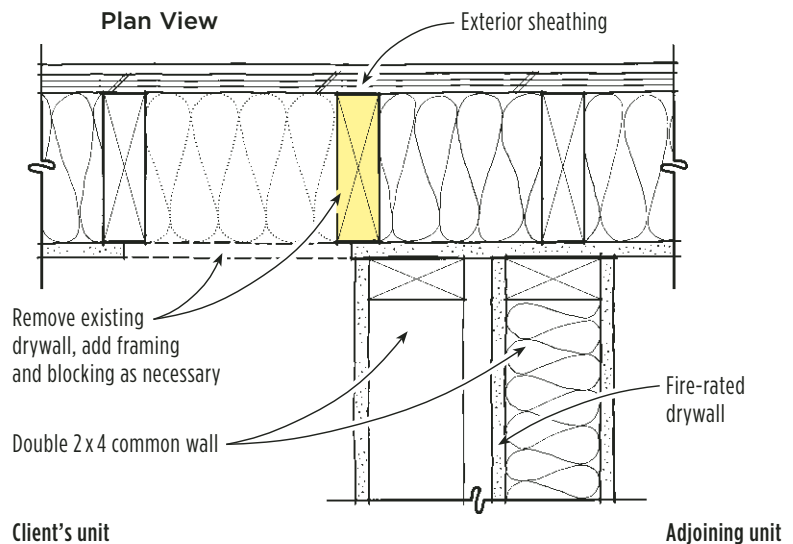
### Fill Gaps at Baseboard Level



A. *Fernando Pagés Ruiz, a contractor in Lincoln, Neb., and the author of Building an Affordable House, responds:* According to Appendix K of the IRC (which, of course, might not be locally adopted), dwelling-unit separation walls must have a minimum sound-transmission class rating of 45 (at which loud speech can be barely heard through the assembly). In your case, the double-wall construction you describe should meet this requirement, but I suspect that construction defects are still allowing considerable noise to seep through. So the first thing you need to do is find the sound leaks, which are reducing the wall's effectiveness.

Start by getting down on your hands and knees and listening. You may discover that most of the sound is filtering in at baseboard level. Drywall hangers often leave a gap between the bottom sheet of drywall and the floor, which allows air and noise infiltration. After removing the baseboards, fill any large gaps with drywall and tape the seams, allowing the tape to mask the joint between the floor and the wall (see illustrations). Smaller gaps should be sealed

### Add Blocking at Improperly Built Corners



#### GOT A QUESTION?

Send it to Q&A, *JLC*,  
186 Allen Brook Lane,  
Williston, VT 05495;  
or e-mail to [jlc-editorial@hanleywood.com](mailto:jlc-editorial@hanleywood.com).

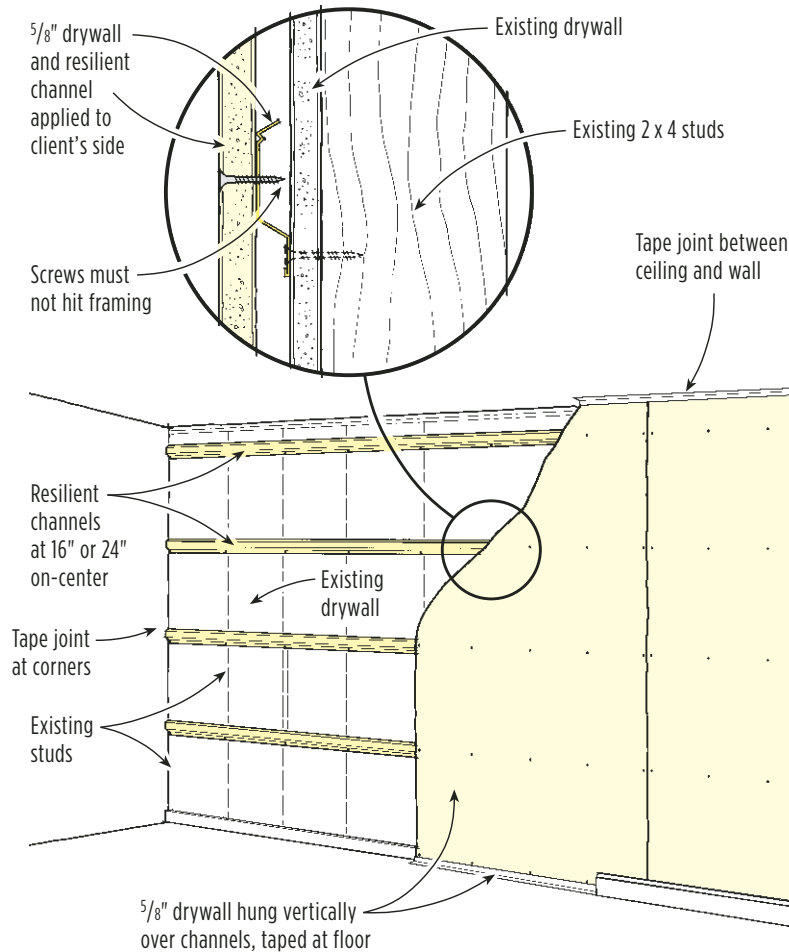
with an acoustical caulk.

Next, check the sidewalls for “flanking paths” that allow sound to come through the corners. Improperly built corners transmit noise, and the solution involves removing drywall and adding framing and blocking as necessary so that the wall goes through the adjacent corners to the exterior sheathing. Check the attic or ceiling, too. Sound travels around these joints when they’re built improperly.

If all of these steps fail to reduce sound levels adequately, you can buy resilient

channel at the drywall supply shop and apply it horizontally to your wall at 16- or 24-inch centers. Then hang  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch drywall vertically over the channels, making sure your screws do not go all the way through the channel into the framing, since this would defeat the spring action provided by the channel. Also, be sure to tape the new drywall to the ceilings, adjacent walls, and floor, which will help seal the leaks that permit sound transmission. Of course, it would be even better if you could get the neighbor to take the same steps.

### Add Resilient Channel and Drywall



## Q. Dealing With a Peeling Floor Finish

*Recently, I removed wall-to-wall carpeting from an older maple floor finished with (I presume) polyurethane. While the finish had some paint splatters and stains, the flooring itself looked to be in good shape, so I simply scuff-sanded it with a pole sander, scraping and hand-sanding the tougher spots. Then I vacuumed the floor, wiped it down with mineral spirits, and applied a new coat of polyurethane. This was a process I had used in another room of the house with good results, but in this case the polyurethane has started to flake and peel away, particularly in high-traffic areas. What happened? Is a full refinishing the only option at this point?*

**A.** *Michael Purser, a second-generation wood-flooring contractor in Atlanta, responds:* There are a lot of reasons a floor finish might not bond during a recoat. But based on your comments about the carpeting and your description of the area where the delaminating of the coating is occurring (in high-traffic regions), I am willing to put good money on the likelihood that some type of contaminant — probably paste or acrylic wax — was on the floor. This would have been a natural alternative for the previous owner to have chosen for a high-traffic area to restore the luster before giving up and going to carpeting. The reason the finish you applied is delaminating now is that it cannot properly bond to the old finish.

Unfortunately, waxes of any type are very difficult to

detect without some knowledge of what to look for or how to test for their presence. For example, rubbing a cloth dampened with mineral spirits onto a section of flooring is one method I use to find paste wax. To find acrylic waxes, I'll use either alcohol or a mild ammonia solution, both of which will slightly discolor an acrylic finish.

The problem, however, is that neither paste nor acrylic wax can be chemically removed with 100 percent certainty. Mineral spirits simply dissolve and redistribute paste waxes over a larger area, and have no effect at all on acrylic waxes, which can't be removed with alcohol or ammonia, either. Because the results can be so uncertain in the presence of contamination, every manufacturer of wood-floor coatings tells you not to apply its products over a finish that has been previously waxed.

If you're considering recoating a floor, I strongly recommend that you get in touch with a wood-flooring contractor. This person will usually know what to look for and will be able to perform some simple tests to determine whether there are any surface contaminants; he or she can also tell you which coatings can safely be applied to which finishes.

Meanwhile, I'm afraid you are faced with a full sanding and refinishing if you want a coating to go down and stay down.

## Q. Compressive Strength Of Cellular PVC Trim

*What kind of compressive strength do cellular PVC trim products such as Azek have? Can they be safely sandwiched between a supporting column and a bearing beam, for example?*

**A.** *Jeff Keisling, vice president of research and development for Azek, responds:* While Azek isn't rated for structural applications, it does have a limited amount of strength. For example, 1/2-inch-thick Azek has a compressive strength of about 1,000 pounds per square inch, which is much less than the compressive strength of wood.

If you're confident that you've accurately calculated

the actual loads and the surface area of your supporting columns, and that you've detailed the bearing surfaces so that there is full contact across the total surface area (rather than point loading), it may be safe to use a cellular PVC product like Azek this way. But it would be best if structural members bore directly on one another, with the trim material cut to fit around the structural bearing points.

For situations where larger laminated support beams, columns, and joists need to be covered, Azek now offers trim boards as wide as 16 inches, in addition to a full line of sheet goods.