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A suspended ceiling can be both attractive and functional.



Figure A



Figure B



Figure C



Figure D

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Stand on it.





Figure E



Figure F



Figure G



Figure H



Figure I



Figure J



On the back of each tile you'll find a directional arrow to show which direction the tile should face.

Suspended Tile Ceiling

If you're getting ready to finish out your basement, don't overlook the need for a good ceiling. Keep in mind, too, that drywall isn't your only option. Anyone with basic carpentry skills can install a suspended ceiling that's both attractive and functional. You can give your room a unique appearance, and you'll still have easy access to the plumbing and wiring above the ceiling.

Materials:

ceiling tiles
track system, including tracks, suspension wire and eye bolts
pop rivet gun and rivets
drill with drill bits and an eyebolt driver
measuring tape
pliers
tin snips
hammer
utility knife
straight edge
chalk line
level
laser level (optional)
spring clamps
fence staples
safety glasses

Steps:

1. Measure the ceiling so you'll know how many tiles to buy. When you get the tiles home, open up the packages and inspect each tile. That way, if any of them are damaged, you can exchange them at the store before you begin.
2. Determine the location for the ceiling. A general rule of thumb is that the ceiling should be located at least three inches below the lowest object overhead (an air-conditioning duct, for example). If you plan on installing lights in the suspended ceiling, you should position it six inches below the lowest overhead object. This will allow enough room to tilt the panels so that you can install or remove them. Measure the distance from the lowest object to the floor, subtract three inches (or six inches, depending on your situation) and mark the corners of the room at that height.

* Keep in mind that the ceiling should be at least 7-1/2 feet above the floor. Anything lower will seem cramped and dungeon-like.
3. Mark a level line around the room at the height you want the ceiling to be. Although you can use a long level for this step, you can rent a laser level to make the job easier. Just suspend it at the appropriate height, and it will "draw" a level line around the entire room.

* Caution: Don't look directly into the laser light.
4. Measure the length of the wall and cut wall track to length with tin snips.
5. Secure the wall track with screws (**figure A**). Be sure the screws go into the studs behind the wall. For inside corners, you can butt the ends of the molding against one another (**figure B**). For outside corners, cut one track about 1/2" longer than the wall; then cut the vertical portion so that it's flush with the corner of the wall. Attach the first track to the wall. Then cut the adjacent track so that it's about one inch too long, and cut the vertical portion so that it's flush with the corner of the wall. Attach the second track so that the long portion is under the long part of the first track. Then fold the long section of the second track over the long section of the first track (**figure C**) to create a smooth, professional look.
6. Determine the layout for your ceiling by drawing a diagram based on the actual measurements of the room. Design your layout so that the tiles next to the wall are at least six inches wide and the main runners are perpendicular to the joists. Using your diagram as a reference, mark layout lines on the wall for the main T-supports.
7. Use a drill with an eyebolt adapter (**figure D**) to drive eyebolts into the joists. The eyebolts will be used to support the main runners and should be spaced 48 inches apart; if your main T-supports are perpendicular to the joists and the joists are on 16-inch centers, then the eyebolts can be placed on every third joist. Stretch a piece of string between opposite walls to use as a reference in keeping the eyebolts in a straight line.
8. Wrap a piece of suspension wire through each eyebolt (**figure E**), pulling it taut so that it hangs in a straight line. Be sure to use the proper wire, and leave about one foot of extra length for easier installation.
9. Position the first main T-support along the layout line. Make sure it's parallel to

- the wall and clamp it in place with a spring clamp **(figure F)**.
10. Then secure the T-support to the wires hanging from the eyebolts **(figure G)**. Stretch a piece of string between the two wall tracks or use the laser level to help you keep the support level. Repeat the process for the rest of the main supports .
 11. When the main supports are all in place, install the four-foot cross-supports and then the two-foot cross-supports. Just snap them into place in the appropriate slots **(figure H)**.
 12. When the T-supports and cross-supports are in place, check them for square by measuring some of the individual squares diagonally. If the two diagonal measurements are the same, the track is square.
 13. Next, drill holes through both the wall track and the ends of the T-supports, and fasten them with pop rivets **(figure I)**.
 14. Install the perimeter tiles, which will probably require some trimming. Just measure the distance from the wall to the center of a cross-T **(figure J)**, and transfer the measurement to the back of a ceiling tile. Then cut the tile with a utility knife and lay it in place. If the tile is contoured, you may need to trim it additionally so that it sits flat in the tracks.
 15. Finally, install the rest of the tiles. Tilt them up through the openings, and lower them to rest squarely on all four T-supports.

Resources:**For More Ideas...**

If instructions for this project aren't listed above, you may be able to find similar projects in the [Building and Remodeling Index](#) , or consult our [Resource List](#) for helpful publications and organizations.

Also be sure to check out *HGTV's Complete Fix-It* manual, which contains step-by-step instructions for over 200 home repairs, fix-ups and projects with detailed, full-color illustrations and pictures. Go to [Table of Contents](#) or click [here](#) to order this book.

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