

J THOMAS HOME

INSTALLATION GUIDE FOR ALCOVE FLOATING SHELVES

Our Alcove Floating Shelves use a wooden cleat support system with a simple, seamless install. Available in **1 5/8", 2", and 3" thicknesses**, they can also be **trimmed on the sides** for a custom built-in fit. This guide will walk you through measuring, preparing, and installing for a secure, professional finish.

Before you order, measure your alcove and allow for a small gap (about 1/16–1/8" on each side). For example, a 34 3/4" wide opening would take a 34 5/8" shelf. For the tightest, most professional fit, you can also order slightly longer and trim the shelf on-site.

WHAT'S INCLUDED



Shelf



Wooden Cleats



Screws



Screws

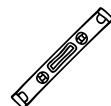
TOOLS NEEDED FOR INSTALLATION



Drill



Drill Bits



Level



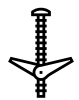
Pencil



Tape
measure



Stud Finder
(Optional)



Toggle Bolts
(Optional)



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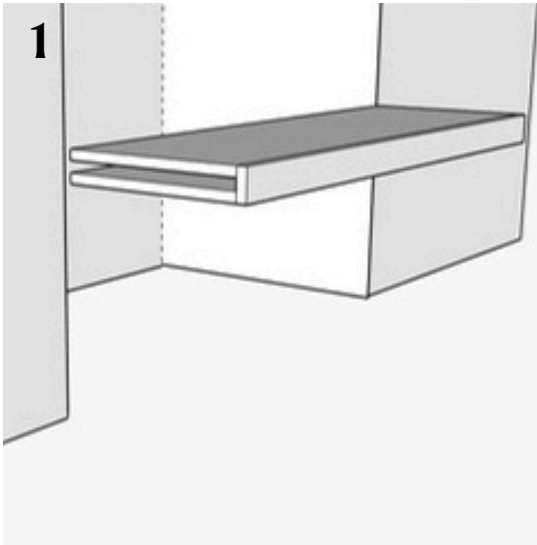
customerservice@jthomashome.com

913.353.4283

Monday - Friday 7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. CST

ALCOVE SHELF INSTALLATION STEPS

1



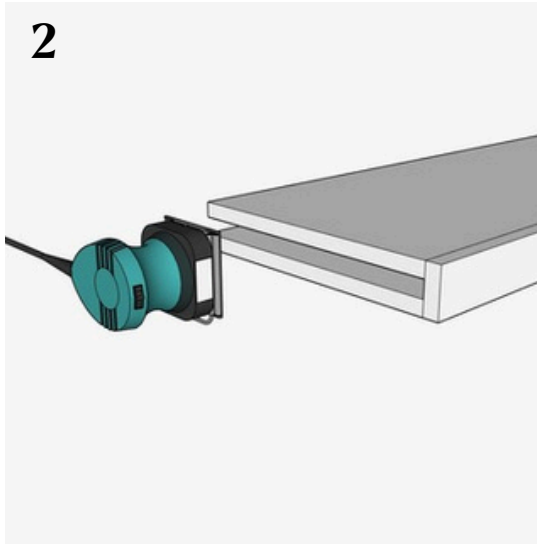
Check the Fit

Too Small? If your shelf is slightly smaller than the alcove (up to 1/8" gap on each side), that's perfect!

Too Big? If the shelf is too wide, you'll need to sand or trim it.

Pro Tip: Alcove walls are rarely perfectly square, so expect to make small adjustments for a seamless fit.

2

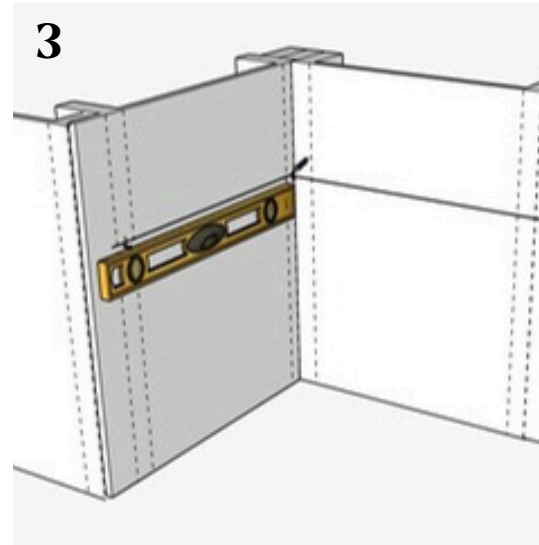


Sand or Trim if Needed

Sanding (Recommended): Sanding is the safest option. Use tape to mark the sanding area for accuracy.

Sawing (If Necessary): Apply tape along the center of the cut line. Mark the cut line on the tape. Score the line with a razor knife and straight edge. This minimizes splintering, especially with saws that cut upwards or have dull blades.

3

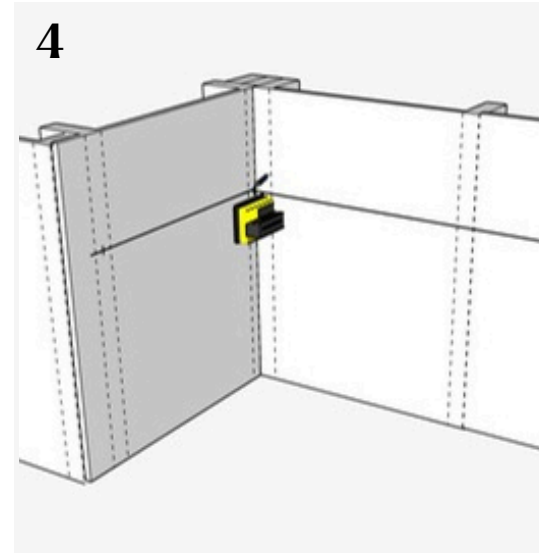


Mark Cleat Positions

Use your level to draw a level line across the back wall, from wall to wall. Then, using the same line as a starting point, draw level lines on the side walls. This ensures all three lines are perfectly aligned.

Pro Tip: A laser level makes this step much easier.

4



Locate and Mark Studs

Use a stud finder to locate the studs along your marked lines. Mark each stud location on the wall so you'll know where to drill and secure the cleats later. Aim to catch at least two studs per cleat whenever possible.

Tip: See page 4 for info on studs and other ways to locate them.

Have Questions? We're Here to Help.

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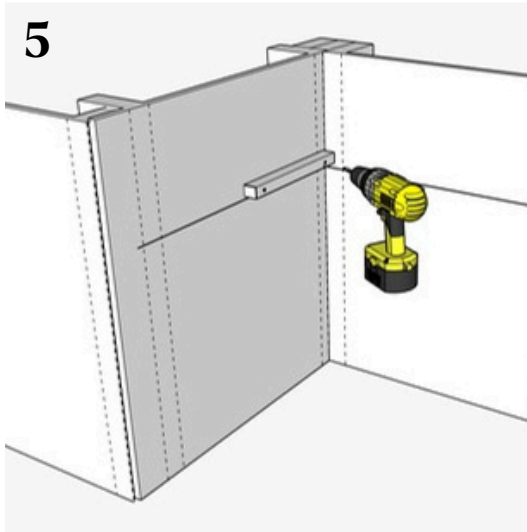
Installing on Alternative Surfaces

Installing your shelves on a surface other than drywall? No problem. With a few simple adjustments, mounting on tile, stone, concrete, or acoustic panels is easy.

See page 5 for detailed instructions and tips for these surfaces.

ALCOVE SHELF INSTALLATION STEPS

5

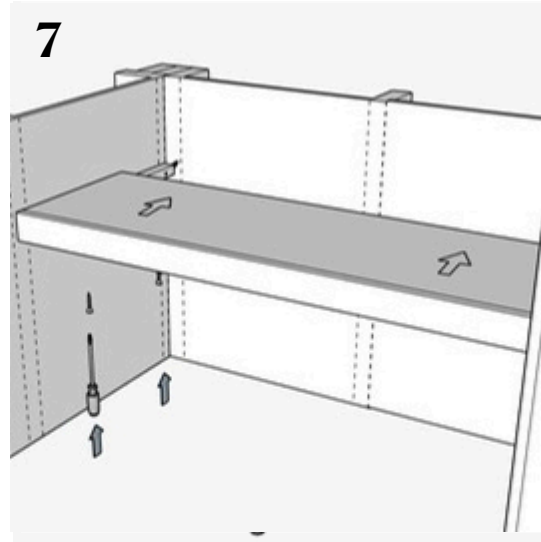


Pre-Drill Cleats

Hold each cleat along your marked line. Pre-drill through the cleat and into the wall at every stud mark to create pilot holes. Aim for a screw in every stud. If only one stud is available, also pre-drill an additional hole in the cleat (and wall) for at least one toggle bolt to provide extra support. Repeat for all cleats.

Note: Shelves up to 42" include two side cleats. Shelves 42" and over include an extra center cleat.

7

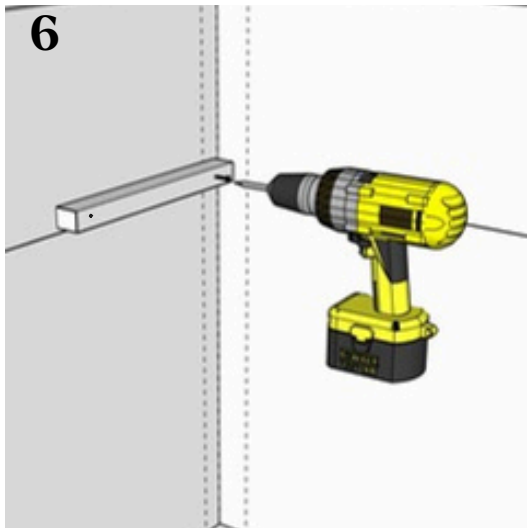


Secure the Shelf

Slide the shelf into the alcove, fitting the cleats into the underside grooves, and push it fully to the back. Secure the shelf using the provided screws:

- 1 5/8" and 2" shelves: Use the shorter screws through the pre-drilled countersink holes on the bottom of the shelf.
- 3" shelves: Use the same screws as the wall cleats, driving them through the countersink holes on the top of the shelf.

6



Attach the Cleats

Secure the cleats to the wall with the provided screws, using studs wherever possible. If a stud isn't available, use drywall anchors or a mix of both. Keep the cleats level and be sure the side cleats are firmly fastened, as they provide the main support.



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What are Studs and How to Locate them

Stud Basics

A stud is a vertical 2x4 wood beam behind your drywall that supports your wall. Alcove shelves should be anchored into at least one stud—two is ideal for added strength. If only one stud is available, secure the cleat into that stud and use at least one toggle bolt through the cleat for additional support.

Finding a Stud

Best method: Use a stud finder for quick and accurate results.

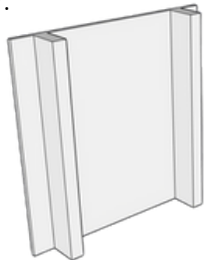
No stud finder? Try these alternatives:

Knock Test

- Tap along the wall in a horizontal line.
- A hollow sound indicates no stud, while a solid thud likely means you've found one.
- Mark the solid spots for further checking.

Outlet Method

- Turn off power and remove an outlet cover.
- Look inside to see which side the stud is on.
- Studs are typically spaced 16 inches apart (sometimes 24 inches), measured center to center.



Wall showing studs



Wall studs with blocking

Blocking (if walls are open))

What is Blocking?

Blocking means adding horizontal wood pieces—usually 2x4 or 2x6 lumber—between wall studs. This creates a solid surface behind the drywall so the cleats for your alcove shelf can be securely fastened into wood.

Why Use It?

If your walls are already open this will make the final installation even easier. In essence, it turns the entire space into a stud so every screw hits solid wood.

Pros: Provides maximum strength and long-term stability. Makes hanging a breeze everywhere it's installed.

Cons: Walls need to be open and studs accessible.

Using Drywall Anchors (Toggle Bolts)

When installing alcove shelves, it's best to fasten each cleat into at least two wall studs for maximum strength. If you're only able to hit one stud—or if extra support is needed—heavy-duty drywall anchors, such as toggle bolts, are recommended. Toggle bolts expand behind the wall to securely hold screws in hollow drywall where no stud is present.

Installation Tips:

- Use at least one toggle bolt in any cleat section where a stud is not available.
- The number and placement of toggle bolts may vary depending on your shelf size and cleat length.
- Always follow manufacturer instructions for proper installation.

Our Favorites:

- TOGGLER SNAPTOGGLE Heavy-Duty Drywall Toggle Bolts, 3/16"-24 UNC Zinc-Plated Anchors
- Hillman 101085 Zinc Flat Head Phillips Machine Screws, size 10-24 x 2-1/2" (100 pack) – may be needed when custom screw lengths are required.

Installing Over Tile

Installing alcove shelves over tile follows the standard process with a few added steps:

- **Locate Studs:** Use a stud finder to mark where each cleat will intersect wall studs behind the tile.
- **Mark Drill Points:** Mark pilot hole locations on the tile—preferably at grout lines to reduce cracking risk, if alignment allows.
- **Drill Pilot Holes:** Use a carbide-tipped or diamond tile drill bit suitable for ceramic, porcelain, or stone. Drill slowly and steadily to avoid damaging the tile.
- **Anchor as Usual:** Secure the cleats to the studs with screws. If only one stud is available, add at least one toggle bolt through the cleat for extra support. Where no stud is present, use toggle bolts or drywall anchors.
- **Proceed with Standard Installation:** Once cleats are secured, continue with the regular alcove shelf installation steps.

Note on Uneven Surfaces:

For textured or dimensional tile (e.g., ledgerstone, stacked stone, ledger panels), the surface may not allow the cleats to sit flush against the wall. In these cases:

- Build out the wall surface behind the cleat to create a level base.
- Trim or notch tile as needed around the cleat to allow proper alignment and fit.

Installing Over Brick, Stone, or Concrete

Installing floating shelves over masonry surfaces like brick, stone, or concrete is similar to the standard installation but requires a few additional tools and steps:

- **Mark Cleat Placement:** Plan and mark where your cleats will be mounted. If possible, align with the mortar joints rather than the solid brick or stone to make drilling easier.
- **Use the Right Drill Bit:** You'll need a hammer drill and a masonry bit to create pilot holes in these hard surfaces. Drill slowly and steadily to maintain accuracy.
- **Install Masonry Anchors:** Instead of wood screws or standard drywall anchors, use heavy-duty masonry anchors or concrete screws (e.g., Tapcon screws) to secure the cleat directly into the wall.
- **Continue Standard Installation:** Once the cleats are anchored securely, proceed with the regular alcove shelf installation steps..

Note on Uneven Surfaces:

For textured or irregular stone, the cleat may not sit flush. In this case:

- Shim behind the cleat or build out a level mounting surface.
- You may also need to notch the stone or adjust shelf placement for proper fit.

Installing with Metal Studs

If your wall has metal studs instead of wood, installing alcove shelves requires a few adjustments. Metal studs don't hold screws the same way wood does, so regular wood screws are not recommended.

Instead, use self-drilling metal stud anchors or toggle bolts specifically rated for use with metal. These anchors are designed to grip the thin framing securely without stripping out. As with wood stud installations, try to fasten each cleat into at least one metal stud. Where no stud is available, add at least one toggle bolt through the cleat for additional support.

When in doubt, consulting a contractor or professional installer can help ensure a safe and secure installation.

Extra Info Tip: Choosing the Right Screws
Our hardware packets include screws for wood stud installation. If you're installing into metal studs, brick, or concrete, you will need to purchase appropriate mounting hardware.

ADDITIONAL TIPS, TRICKS AND TROUBLESHOOTING FOR ALCOVE SHELF INSTALLATION

Installing Over Acoustic Slat Wall Paneling

Installing alcove shelves over our acoustic slat wall paneling follows the standard installation process, with a few adjustments:

- **Locate Studs:** Before installing the paneling, use a stud finder to identify and mark the stud locations on the wall. This makes it easier to align your cleats later.
- **Install Slat Wall Paneling:** Mount the paneling according to the manufacturer's instructions, transferring your stud marks to the panel surface as you go.
- **Use Longer Screws:** Because our acoustic slat wall panels are 13/16" thick, you'll need longer screws than the standard hardware provided. We recommend using screws that are 4" or longer to ensure secure cleat anchoring into the studs.
- **Proceed with Standard Installation:** Once the cleats are installed through the paneling and into the studs, continue with the regular alcove shelf installation steps.



Helpful Links

[Installation videos](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Warranty information](#)

[Contact Us](#)

At J Thomas Home, we're proud to offer high-quality custom floating shelves that add both beauty and function to your space. Your new shelves are built to last and will be a timeless addition you'll enjoy for years to come.

Have questions?

Get help from a pro, email us at customerservice@jthomashome.com
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