Subject: DIY Panels
Posted by Madison on Fri, 11 Aug 2017 11:12:56 GMT
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We live in a row house and my two daughters play various musical instruments including a piano. Of course, we want to be respectful of our neighbors who shouldn't have to hear it. In order to contain the music, I made some DIY acoustic panels from the directions on Lifehacker. It seemed like a good plan, but when I go outside, I can still hear the music although not as loudly as before. Should I add more panels or should I scrap the project all together and try something else?

Subject: Re: DIY Panels
Posted by Wayne Parham on Fri, 11 Aug 2017 18:28:21 GMT
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Absorbent panels made from old towels will be better than nothing, but could be improved upon quite a bit.

One problem is you need to damp a wide range of frequencies. High frequencies are pretty easy to absorb but midrange is harder and low frequencies are the hardest to damp. Acoustic wedges, foam and fibrous insulation materials work well at medium to high frequencies and vibrating panels work best down low. You probably won't have any trouble with high frequencies, but you'll need to absorb both midrange and low frequencies to be effective at keeping sounds from emanating from your house.

Be realistic though. If you're not going to be playing a rock band with amplifiers cranked up really loud, then you may not have a problem. Acoustic instruments are usually capable of being louder than vocal conversation level, but I wouldn't expect them to wake up the neighbors. You might have someone play the instruments and go outside to see how much you can really hear. Chances are, if your daughters are playing acoustic instruments without amplification, then you're OK without any additional sound damping treatments.

Subject: Re: DIY Panels
Posted by Madison on Tue, 15 Aug 2017 19:10:46 GMT
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Wayne, thanks for the help. I made some plain foam panels to go with my towel panels and it seems better. I couldn't figure out the vibrating panel. I found lots of DIY instructions, but it was beyond my skill set.

Before we moved here, we had a large yard with lots of space between us and the neighbor so noise was never an issue. Now, we live in a row house on the other side of the country. Even

though we aren't sharing a wall with our neighbors, we're right on top of each other. I just don't want us to make them uncomfortable when my girls play the piano, flute, or clarinet. Beautiful music to a mother's ear is a screeching sound to a stranger.

Thanks again for the help!

Subject: Re: DIY Panels
Posted by Becky on Tue, 04 Nov 2025 18:27:39 GMT
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That’s actually really cool that you made your own panels. From what I have read about blocking noise, acoustic panels mostly help the sound inside the room but they don't really block noise from getting out or leaving the room. Hearing the music outside, probably would be more about soundproofing. Things like sealing gaps under doors, fixing windows, or hanging heavy curtains would help more with that.
You don’t need to scrap the panels because it still help with echo, they're still doing their job by reducing echo in the room. Keeping sound from escaping just needs different, heavier materials than fabric panels.

Subject: Re: DIY Panels
Posted by Hank on Fri, 18 Sep 2026 06:22:53 GMT
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I ran into the exact same problem when I put up DIY panels in my old row house. They quieted the room a little but the piano still carried outside because panels mostly soak up echo, not block sound from leaving.

I added more panels and sealed every gap around the doors and windows, which helped some more. For better results I later tried heavy curtains and a thick rug.

I’d keep what you built. They make the room nicer for your daughters and just layer on sealing next. That combo worked better for me than starting over.
