

When Cork Display Rails Fail

And Today's Newer, Smarter Classroom Solution



Cork rails entered the nation's classrooms during the 1960's and never left.

The front of a modern-day classroom bears little resemblance to one of 50 years ago.

Gone is the blackboard with its dusty erasers and brittle chalk, replaced by the white board and then the interactive white board, video monitor and other electronic display devices. Everything has changed it seems, except for one.

The Cork Display Rail

Also called the art or map rail, the cork rail was introduced after the patent for the original cork bulletin board expired in 1940 and was well-established in the educational setting by the 1960's. Today it can be found in K-12 classrooms everywhere as designers and architects continue to specify cork rails for new school construction.

The cork rail was well-established in the educational setting by the 1960's

Map Rail: Provide the following accessories:

1. Display Rail: Continuous and integral with the map rail; fabricated of cork rail approximately 1 to 2 inches tall to match the width of white board.
2. End Stops: Located at each end of the map rail.
3. Map Hooks: Two map hooks for every 48 inches of map rail or fraction thereof.

This language is typical of a cork rail specification for school construction.

Why the Longevity?

Cork display rails have survived in the classroom for over a half-century because of their sheer simplicity and unmatched versatility – the same reasons why they're so difficult to replace.

Consisting of an extruded aluminum channel with an adhesive-backed cork strip, cork rails can be installed over dry wall and concrete masonry units (CMUs), the two most common school wall construction materials.

Employing readily-available "sharps" such as thumb tacks, push-pins or staples, cork rails can be used to display paper materials in different shapes and sizes ranging from tissue-paper to poster-board in thickness.

So any new display technology that isn't as simple or versatile as cork rail doesn't stand a chance in today's classrooms. And to finally end cork rail's reign, it would also have to excel in areas where cork rails fail.

The Risk is Real

Sharps used as fasteners for cork rails can easily be misplaced and turn up unexpectedly, accidentally injuring a student who steps on them with thin-soled shoes, for example, or a preschooler who sticks one in their mouth. Drawers containing loosely discarded sharps are also accidents waiting to happen when a teacher rummages around inside looking for one.

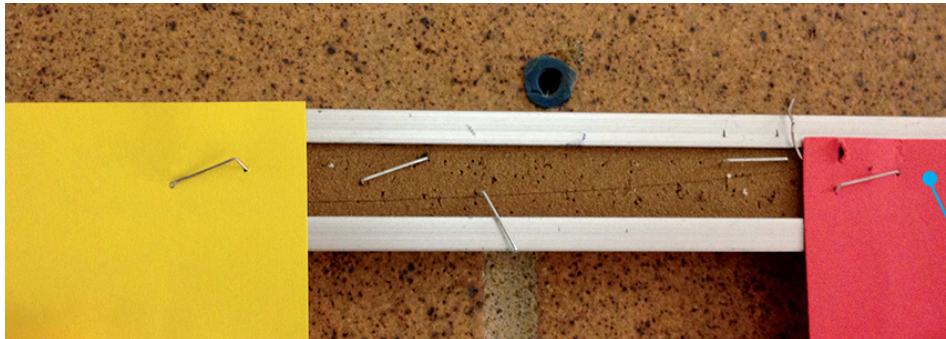
“The parents of a 3-year-old boy who choked to death after swallowing a pushpin at the Oceanside Montessori School has filed a lawsuit against the school.”

Los Angeles Times, January 6, 2012

Sharps are also magnets for mischief-makers who like to put thumb-tacks on chairs. Catching victims by surprise, this not only inflicts pain and embarrassment, it can also expose the school to complaints and possible litigation from parents.

The Ragged Edge

Anything you secure with a tack has the potential to look tacky. And by the time you perforate paper a couple of times with sharps to hang it, it's already marred.



Sharps are magnets for mischief-makers who like to put thumb-tacks on chairs.

Then after you reposition it a couple more times, tug on it and possibly tear it in the process of taking it down, it's hardly suitable for transferring to a refrigerator – the second most popular place for displaying student artwork.

Anything you secure with a tack has the potential to look tacky.

Ready. Or Not.

Sharps are needed before cork rails can be pressed into service. Which means they have to be inventoried, requisitioned, purchased and stored in order to make sure they're always ready. Sharps also have to be removed, resorted and stored again before they can be reused with the exception of staples, which have to be pried loose and discarded, creating another unwanted task for overworked teachers.



Staples have to be pried loose and discarded, creating yet another unwanted task for overworked teachers.

Hanging items on cork rails with staples is convenient and easy; removing them, not so much.

Parts Not Included

Because there are so many cork rails on the market, vendors typically sell parts separately in order to lower the base price and be more competitive. End caps are the item most frequently excluded with customers either purchasing them separately or fabricating their own – often with less than ideal results. Mounting hardware is also often missing, so installers may use their own which can include round head screws that cause cork inserts applied over them to bubble and crack. Map clips, when they're available, always cost extra.



Cork rail vendors typically sell parts separately in order to be more competitive.

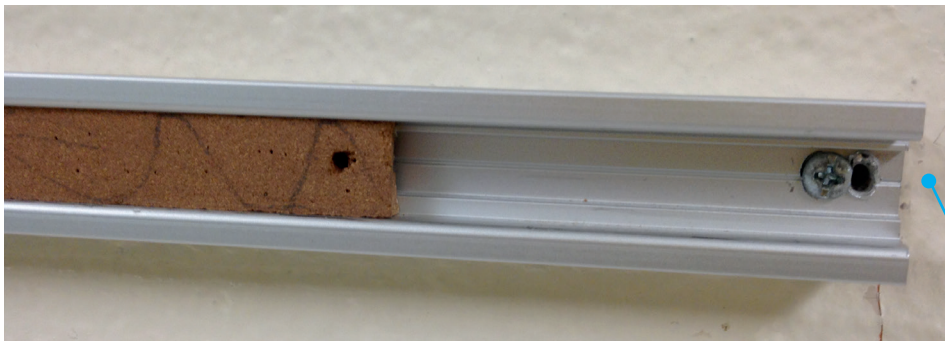
Improvised end caps can still leave something missing in terms of looks.

Thin to Win

Another way suppliers are cutting corners to be more competitive is by making inserts thinner. So sharps bottom out on the metal rail and provide less support for heavier items in particular. Since there's less cork in them to begin with, inserts also wear out sooner and require replacing more often.

Use it and Lose it

Cork is a natural product that changes over time. As it dries, it shrinks and tears loose from the adhesive, most visibly at each end where it's perforated by screws securing the end caps and pressure from shrinkage is greatest.



Over time, cork can shrink by 2-4 inches over the length of a 6-foot rail.

Cork also becomes brittle as it ages and can crumble and peel away at the surface – especially in places where sharps have been repeatedly inserted – creating voids that can no longer retain sharps.



Cork will erode and tear away over time, losing its ability to retain sharps.

The Stains Remain

Cork is extremely porous and will soak up everything, especially ink from pens and markers. Once defaced, there's no way to restore cork to its original appearance so the only option is to replace it. Until that happens, the writing is on the wall for everyone to see, whether it's slanderous, sexually explicit or simply unsightly. Graffiti, in particular, can constitute "bullying," and create concerns for parents, school administrators and even law enforcement officials.



Like the classroom vandals that deface them, cork rails won't come clean.

"... graffiti can violate state laws against vandalism, malicious destruction of property, threats and intimidation and hate motivated offenses. The graffiti itself is tangible, legal evidence of the crime."

School Bullying: Tools for avoiding Harm and Liability, Mary Jo McGrath, 2007

An Uneasy Fix

Replacing the cork insert in a display rail is easier said than done. Removing the adhesive can be difficult and time-consuming, and if done improperly, prevents a satisfactory adhesive bond from forming between the aluminum channel and new insert. Usually, it's simply more cost-effective to replace the entire rail which can involve patching, sanding and repainting the wall before a new one can be installed.

Replacing the cork rail insert is easier said than done.



Attempting to replace a cork rail insert can be an exercise in futility.

On the other hand, before you replace a cork rail, maybe you should consider an alternative that's already proven itself in classrooms all across the country.

New School vs. Old School

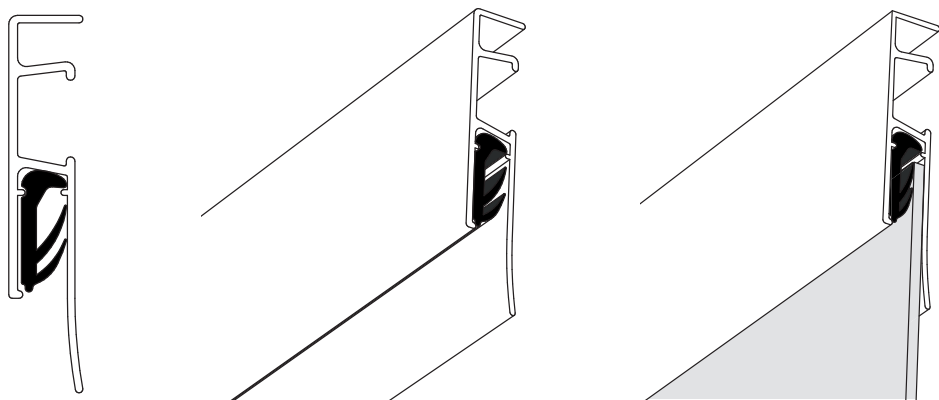
Ushering in a new era in display rail technology, the Casso® Display Rail is making a move to the head of the class well ahead of its competition.

Comprised of an extruded aluminum housing with a removable insert, it's as simple as the cork rail and far simpler than other display rails that have moving parts like hinged tops and metal rollers.

Instead of cork, the Casso Rail uses a unique, proprietary, high-tech synthetic insert with two copolymer fingers that give it exceptional strength and versatility.

These copolymer fingers gently grasp paper as it's inserted between them and the aluminum housing and release it just as gently when it's removed.

The thicker the item, the more firmly the fingers grasp, so they can support heavier items like maps. In fact, the entire Casso Rail can be considered a continuous map rail compared with cork rails which typically require map clips to be purchased separately and attached at four-foot intervals.



Flimsy and uneven materials can also be pressed against a flat surface beneath the rail slot making insertion even easier. And hanging items of different thickness side-by-side is never a problem with the Casso Rail like it is with rails featuring hinged tops.

The Casso Display Rail can also be concealed behind trim carpentry or other wall details so it's almost invisible, highlighting whatever it's holding.

Safety First

By eliminating the need for sharps to retain and display classroom materials, Casso Rails reduce their potential for intentionally or accidentally causing pain in the classroom. Eliminating sharps also puts an end to the need for teachers to spend time making sure they're on hand when they're needed – a task many of them would undoubtedly agree is painful, too.

Casso Rail's copolymer fingers generate traction that's both gentle and secure.

By eliminating sharps, Casso Rails make the classroom a safer place.

What Goes in is What Comes Out

Sharps used to retain items displayed on cork rails leave holes and can snag. Rails with metal rollers can rip and tear materials if they're taken out without using the "proper technique," or when the rollers get hung up and jam on staples or other objects. But with the Casso Display Rail, whatever is secured by its copolymer fingers can be removed in exactly the same condition, good-to-go and refrigerator-ready.



Casso Rails help preserve artwork created by little Picassos in the classroom.

Installation is a Snap

Casso Display Rails are shipped with everything required for installation and use – and not just for basic installation on a standard surface or with adhesive backed tape like you get with lightweight products designed for non-commercial use. Casso Rail kits include end caps, mounting clips and universal TripleGrip™ anchors with the proper screws for making a solid connection on brick, cement, gypsum, plaster or ceramic surfaces.



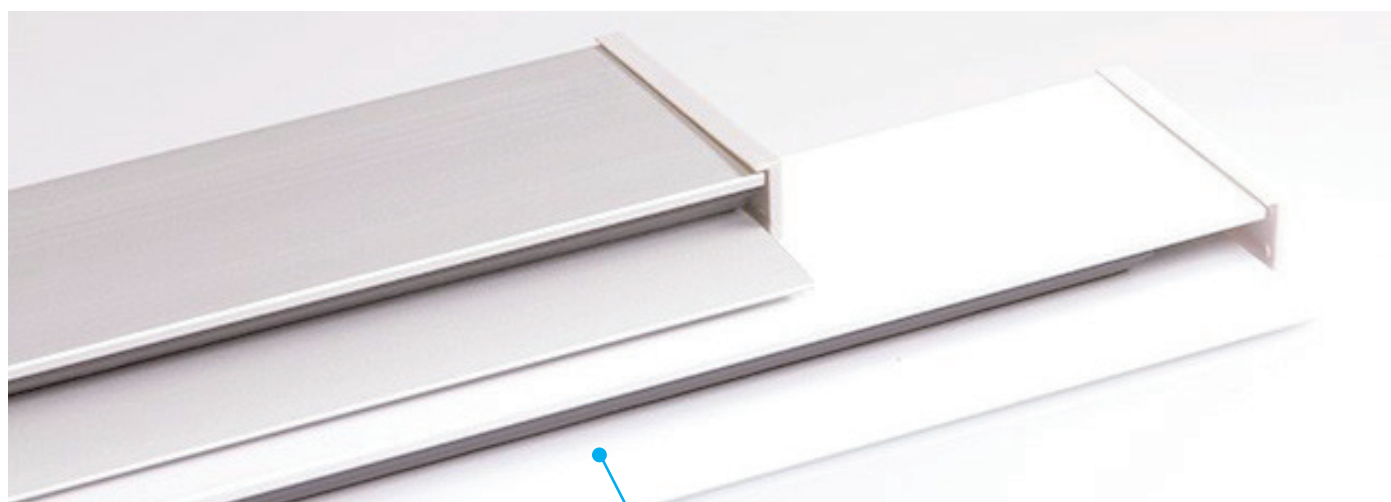
Unlike other display rails, everything you need is included with Casso Rails.

And installation is easy. Just determine where you want the Casso Rail, drill holes, install the anchors and attach the mounting clips, then simply snap the rail in place.

Holes previously drilled for cork rails may also be repurposed for Casso Rails when making the switch. And since Casso Rails are a bit wider than alternatives, there's frequently no need to pre-paint wall surfaces to mask shadow lines and cover blemishes caused by previous cork rail installations.

Student-Proof

There's probably no way to make anything in the classroom completely student-proof. But when it comes to state-of-the-art display rails, Casso is probably as close as it gets. Unlike display rails constructed of brittle PVC designed for low traffic, home and home-office use that can crack and chip, Casso Rails have a sturdy, aluminum outer shell that's difficult to damage. Their anodized and powder-coated surfaces also resist stains and graffiti, while a streamlined design makes them easy to clean and maintain.



Casso Rails come in silver or white finish.

Most importantly, Casso Rail's flexible copolymer fingers are almost fully enclosed so they're unlikely to be damaged. If they ever are, though, all it takes to replace one is to remove an end-cap, exchange the insert and pop the cap back on. It's that easy.

Do the Math

At first glance, cork rails are relatively inexpensive; in fact, you might even say they're cheap. But their low initial cost can be highly deceptive.

By the time you add up the expense of adding end caps, map clips and mounting hardware plus the time and materials required for repairing and replacing them over and over again, the total cost of ownership for cork rails makes any up-front savings seem fairly insignificant by comparison.

The New Best in Class

So why stick with cork rails that require an unending supply of unsafe sharps, are easily marred and damaged, deteriorate over time, and are costly and time-consuming to constantly repair and replace?

Casso Rails are simple, safe, versatile, durable, complete and easy-to-install. Plus, with their streamlined design in a silver or white finish, they blend beautifully into today's contemporary classrooms.



To learn more about using Casso Display Rails for replacing existing rails or specifying them for use in new classroom construction, contact AS Hanging Display Systems at info@ashanging.com or call 866-935-6949 today.

They're the newer, smarter solution that really makes the grade.

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SYSTEMS**



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