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Guide to Concrete Installations: Finishes & Types

Concrete is one of the most versatile patio and hardscape construction materials. It can be broomed, washed, seeded with decorative stones, stained, stamped and colored. It also can be much more economical than stone or other paving materials. The biggest question is what finish is the right one for the particular patio, walkway or driveway to be installed. The cost of a concrete installation will vary depending on the size, finish and preparation required for the area to be installed. Average prices range from \$10-25 per square foot installed.

Finish Types (Sorted in Order of Cost \$-\$\$\$\$):

- 1- Broom finish:** This is one of the simplest finishes, whereby a broom is pulled across the concrete to provide texture (Typically no outdoor concrete should be installed with a completely smooth texture as it will be a slipping hazard when wet). The broom finishing results in fine lines in the finish of the concrete. (Cost: \$)



Dust on Colored Concrete with Broom Finish

- 2- Exposed (Washed) Finish:** An exposed finish simply washes the top layer of concrete away, exposing the natural aggregate stones used in the concrete. It is the common finish texture of most older city sidewalks. (Cost \$)



Exposed Aggregate Concrete Finish

- 3- Salt Finish:** Rock salt is seeded into the concrete surface, then washed away resulting in small pits in the surface of the concrete. This is commonly used for swimming pool decks, or commonly for sidewalks in Santa Barbara and other Southern California communities. Frequently the concrete is colored and salt finished.
- 4- Colored Concrete:** Concrete can be colored in two ways, through an integral mix that is added when the concrete is mixed at the plant, or by dusting on a top coat of colored powder that gives a colored finish to the top layer of concrete only. One of the most important aspects to remember is that colored concrete is a variable product, which can have color variations, blotchiness and fading. From our experience, dust-on colors provide more reliable finish colors. (Cost \$\$)
- 5- Stained Concrete:** This can be performed on either new or existing installations. After the concrete is installed, it is finished with a broom finish and then after it has cured, is sprayed with a specialized concrete stain. These can be done in multiple colors to give marbled or other effects and are most commonly seen on interior floors of restaurants.



6- Seeded Aggregate Finish: Small decorative stones are imbedded into the top layer of concrete, and during the finishing process, exposed to give a pebble texture to the concrete finish. This is a similar technique to exposed concrete, but instead of exposing the natural concrete aggregate, decorative aggregate is added when installed. (Cost \$\$\$)

7- Stamped Concrete: Concrete is typically installed and then stamped with large cookie cutter like patterns. A variety of color applications or finishing methodologies may be used. (Cost \$\$\$\$)

Scoring Patterns: Scoring patterns can be used decoratively and are also used to control cracking. They are typically tooled into the wet concrete, but can also be saw cut for a tighter, more tile like look.

Resources:

Helpful Items from Our Past Blog Articles:

-[Guide to Concrete Finishes](#): Further descriptions and examples of common finish types

-[Don't Paint that Concrete](#): Why painting concrete is usually a mistake

-[Seeded Concrete Aggregate Types](#): Aggregate types common to Northern California for decorative seeded concrete installations

-[Novato Seeded Concrete](#): An example of seeded concrete being installed

-[Stamped Colored Asphalt](#): An alternative to stamped concrete for driveways

Websites:

[Concrete Network](#): [Portfolios](#) and information on concrete finishes

[Quikrete](#): [Guide](#) to Landscape Concrete Applications