

Smart Words for Smart Homeowners

THE EXPERIENCE OF EXPERTS AND THEIR ADVICE ON RELEVANT HOMEOWNER TOPICS

How To Stucco Your Exterior Walls

Overview

Upgrading your exterior walls with a fresh coat of stucco is a great way to enhance your home's appearance. The good news is while stuccoing a home's exterior is a labor-intensive and time-consuming process, the payback for all that work is a home exterior that won't require painting, is waterproof -- and provides extra insulating value.

Another upside is that stucco is made from Portland cement, sand, lime and water -- so it's a completely natural product that has no negative environmental impact. You can make your own stucco by buying the components, or, buy it premixed so all you need to do is add water.

Project Time

Variable, depends on the size of your home and weather conditions, but count on a couple of weeks.

 **CAUTION:** Wear gloves and safety glasses when mixing stucco



Applying Stucco To A Home's Exterior

The temperature and elements need to be right when applying stucco. If the temperature is too hot, the stucco will dry too quickly and crack or shrink. If it's too cold, the mix will be too thick to properly spread. The ideal weather and temperature for installing stucco is on a cloudy day (not raining) with the temperature between 55° and 80°F.

Apply Stucco In Three Layers

The first layer is the "scratch" coat, which is the base coat; followed by the "brown" or second coat, which is the leveling coat to ensure the wall will be smooth; and finally the finish coat, which is the layer of stucco you will actually see.

If you're applying stucco to a block, brick or concrete wall you first need to apply a concrete bonding agent to the walls then allow it to dry.

If your walls are wood, you first need to ensure they are moisture-proof. Cover the walls with roofing felt or plastic house wrap stapled in place. Be sure to overlap

the horizontal seams by at least 6" and the vertical seams by at least 2" to ensure there are no gaps.

Next, cover the walls with 17 gauge metal mesh held in place with galvanized roofing nails (once again overlapping the seams to ensure total coverage).

After the walls have been prepared, the next step is to apply the "scratch" coat using a trowel to spread a 1/2" layer of mortar mix forced down into the wire mesh.

After applying the scratch coat it should be allowed to dry for a few hours. The surface then needs to be roughened or "scratched" using a scratch tool. You can make your own scratch tool by driving 1 1/2" nails about 1" apart through a piece of 1" x 2". The nail heads will protrude about 1/2" and you use them to make horizontal "scratches" on the first layer of stucco about 1/8" deep. After scratching the surface, allow the stucco to dry slowly for a day or two, occasionally misting it with water to keep it from drying too fast.

After the scratch coat has dried, apply the "brown" coat (or layer) about 1/2" thick and "float" it to ensure it's smooth. Once again allow this coat to dry slowly while misting it to keep it slightly moist while it's drying to prevent cracking.

Items You'll Need

Safety Glasses	Roofing Felt Or House Wrap
Ladder	Concrete Bonding Agent
Work Gloves	Hammer
Scratch Tool	Galvanized Nails
Steel Mesh	Trowel
Work Boots	Stucco Mix

The Final Coat

The top coat is applied with a trowel in a layer about 1/4" thick and then finished with your desired pattern.

Create a smooth surface using a wood float across the surface, a swirled appearance by making short arcs with your trowel or a stippled surface by dabbing the surface with a natural sponge.

