

Driveway Two-Step

How to fix ailing asphalt or concrete

by Mike Berger

Repairing your driveway, just like learning to dance, is all about understanding the correct steps. To the uninitiated, the process can seem daunting. But once you understand that it's nothing more than a few combinations of the same basic steps, you quickly lose your nervousness and find yourself two-stepping with the best.

Whether your driveway is asphalt or concrete, fixing damage is easy, fast and cheap. And repairs do more than just prolong the life of the pavement; they help maintain the value of your property. You'll need no special tools or skills, and the repair products you'll use are readily available at most hardware or home improvement stores. With proper care after your repairs, the driveway should last for years.

Asphalt ailments

Asphalt (also known as blacktop or bituminous surface) is a popular driveway paving material and can have a long life with proper care. But if it's not maintained, asphalt can quickly degrade. Ultraviolet rays break down

the asphalt binder, changing the surface color from black to gray. Gas, oil and other petrochemicals will further dissolve the asphalt binder, causing cracks, which eventually erode into potholes. Before you apply protective sealer, you'll need to repair the cracks and holes.

The first step is to clean the pavement. Use an edger to expose the full width of the paved surface, and then thoroughly sweep the driveway. Use a soap-and-water solution and a stiff-bristle brush to clean any spots needing repair. If engine oil has leaked onto the asphalt, use a specially formulated driveway-cleaning solution to treat those areas; then gently power wash the entire surface. Use only a fan-shape wide-dispersal spray tip; a narrow-pattern spray tip can cause additional damage.

Next, use a wire brush to remove debris from any cracks. Depending on the severity of the crack, a variety of repair products can yield favorable results. For small to medium-size cracks, use a pourable crack filler or a

squeeze-out crack-filling compound. Slightly overfill the crack; then use a plastic mastic knife to spread and smooth the filler so that it's even with the surrounding surface (photos, p. 34).

For large or deep cracks, start by filling the crack with sand to within 1/2 in. of the surface. Then use a masticlike filler compound or, for more serious cracks, an asphalt repair fabric such as Driveway Medic.

To fix large holes, first square the edges of the hole with a hammer and cold chisel. Fill the hole with cold-patch compound, and spread it evenly so it is about 1/2 in. above the surrounding surface. Then compact the material with a tamper or with the wheel of a car until it's level with the surface.

After your repairs have cured, you'll want to seal the driveway to protect it from further degradation. Most consumer-grade sealers are water-base emulsions containing water, clay fillers, latex, polymers, additives and either coal tar (a byproduct of baking coal to make coke) or asphalt (a byproduct of petroleum refining).



REPAIRING ASPHALT



Fill small cracks in asphalt with a caulk-type repair compound (above left). Slightly overfill the crack, and use a plastic putty knife to spread and smooth the compound evenly (above right).



To patch larger cracks, use either a masticlike patch compound or an asphalt repair fabric.



Use a cold chisel to square any holes; then slightly overfill the hole with cold patch compound, and tamp the compound flat.



A simple way to flatten any existing high spots is to lay a piece of scrap plywood over the bump and drive your car over it several times.



Pull a squeegee through the puddle of sealer, evenly distributing it over the surface. Be careful to apply only a single coat as you work.

To apply sealer, begin by blocking the driveway with barricades or tape, and mask off any surfaces (such as the garage slab) where you don't want any accidental overflow to run. Pour a narrow puddle of sealer from one side of the driveway to the other. Position a squeegee at an angle, with the puddle of sealer below the center of the squeegee blade. Walk from side to side, pulling the squeegee through the puddle, directing the sealer away from areas you've previously coated.

After several passes, pour more sealer directly into the puddle, again

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forming a band across the width of the driveway, and continue dragging the puddle toward the end of the driveway. Finally, pick up any excess sealer with a flat-blade shovel and allow the driveway to cure.

Concrete cures

In most cases, concrete driveways are durable and long-lasting and require little maintenance. But daily use can

cause the surface to look dingy, and harsh weather can degrade the surface and cause cracks to develop.

A simple way to rejuvenate the overall appearance of a concrete driveway is to power wash the surface. For stubborn stains (such as those from repeated or heavy oil leaks), use a concrete stain remover.

Several products are available to repair small cracks. First remove any

REPAIRING CONCRETE



Power wash the entire surface to remove mild stains and debris from areas to be repaired.

debris or loose material from the crack; then scrub the surrounding area. Rinse thoroughly with clean water and let the area dry. Fill the crack with concrete repair caulk or liquid. Apply caulk in a continuous bead, slightly overfilling as you go; then set the bead



Pourable crack filler will help prevent future water damage.

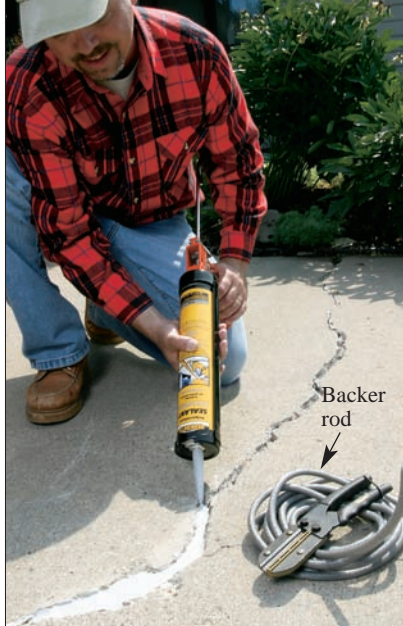
of caulk into the crack.

For a large crack, use a cold chisel to slightly widen and deepen it so that the patching material has a better surface to bond with. If the crack is deeper than 1/2 in., use either backer rod (a flexible foam strip sold in



For large cracks, first slightly enlarge the damage to provide a better grip for the repair product.

coils; see photo, p. 37) or sand tamped into place to bring the bottom of the crack to within 1/2 in. of the surface. Fill the crack with either a self-leveling repair compound or a stiff mixture of concrete patching material. Wear appropriate safety gear



Fill to within 1/2 in. of the surface with backer rod and a repair compound such as this Quikrete product.



Use a dry-mix concrete patch to fill holes or large damaged areas. Apply a thick slurry to the area; then use a trowel to smooth it flush with the surrounding surface.

(see "Protecting Yourself," below).

After the repairs are complete, seal the driveway with a clear concrete sealer to protect the surface from deterioration caused by road salt

and harsh weather. This will also help prevent stains caused by oil and other auto fluids and keep your driveway looking clean and bright. ◆

PROTECTING YOURSELF

Almost all driveway repair products can pose safety problems and health risks. Petroleum-base products and concrete are skin irritants, and concrete dust should never be inhaled. Wear appropriate safety gear when repairing your driveway: long sleeves; gloves (such as neoprene) that are impervious to petroleum- and coal-tar-base fillers and sealers; and a dust mask when working with powdered concrete repair mix. — MB

SOURCES ONLINE

For online information, go to www.HandymanClub.com and click on SOURCES ONLINE.

Cofair Products (Driveway Medic),
800-333-6700

Quikrete (self-leveling sealant), 800-282-5828

Sears (Weatherbeater Premium Driveway
Sealer), 800-349-4358

UGL (Driveway Crack Filler), (570) 344-1202