

Lime Plastering on to laths in 9 Easy Steps!

Lime putty mortars offer advantages over cement based mortars for external rendering, especially when decorated with a traditional limewash:

- their porosity allows the structure to "breathe"
- they can accommodate general movement better
- their self-healing nature reduces cracking problems

As with all lime based materials the best outcome requires patience and careful control of drying and suction, the reward being a good looking and long lasting render.

1. **Safety:**

Ensure that appropriate scaffolding is in place and the worksite safe for workers and public.

2. **Preparation**

Take off the existing render, except any existing sound lime mortars, taking care not to damage the structure. Look out for very thick patches of render that are effectively load bearing. It may be preferable to render on top rather than risk rebuilding an area.

3. **Damping:**

The lath must be sprayed with water until damp at least 30 minutes before starting first coat.

4. **Premixing:**

All lime putty plasters and renders benefit from being pre-mixed for a minimum of two weeks and then agitated/mixed again prior to use to plasticise them which helps to reduce shrinkage in the product.

5. **First Coat \Scratch Coat**

Apply one coat of haired lime putty mortar, 3/1 haired lime putty mortar and press firmly onto the laths. This is known as a scratch coat. Make sure to press firmly so that the hair will act as a bonding agent and the mortar putty will grip firmly to the contours of the lath. Leave to cure for at least 24 hours. Do not over trowel this coat otherwise too much plaster may be lost through the lath. Do not trowel this coat too smooth but instead leave an open textured surface for extra key for the next coat of plaster.

Lightly scratch this coat with a lath or comb scratcher and leave to dry and cure until green hard. A lime mortar or plaster is green hard when it can only be marked with a metal tool. It is dry enough for any shrinkage to have taken place without having to be completely dry.

6. Curing time in between coats

All coats need to be given a few days to harden before subsequent coats are applied. To test whether a coat is 'green hard' the surface should be resistant to a fingernail. Many factors will influence the timing such as the season, exposure of wall and the thickness of the coat but it would be normal to expect a couple of days of curing time for the haired\float coat to harden and perhaps 4 - 6 days for each of the thicker coats.

In warm weather it will be necessary to spray each coat after you have finished to control the curing times and whatever the season, protect each render coat during the curing process from all the elements such as heat, wind, strong sun, rain and do not apply in temperatures below 5 degrees centigrade or if there is a risk of frost. A heavy cloth such as hessian sheeting will provide a suitable physical barrier and should be left in place as long as required.

7. Second \ Float Coat

Spray dampen the first coat of plaster before applying a second coat of unhaired 3:1 putty mortar. This is known as a float coat. We recommend a second coat of unhaired putty mortar as there will be no chance of hair coming through the top coat. Leave to cure for at least 24 hours. This coat should be 8–12mm thick. Float this coat with a wooden devil float to provide a suitable surface for the final skim coat and leave to dry and cure until green hard.

8. Final Finish Plaster Coat

Spray dampen the plaster before you apply a top coat of our lime-rich, 3:2 lime putty plaster, based on a very fine sand and lime putty in either one or two applications. For the very smoothest of textures, the second coat should be a 1mm skim of our lime putty plaster. If any shrinkage cracks appear, lightly spray the plaster with water and trowel or sponge in the cracks.

9. Drying & Curing

A ceiling that is being plastered and there is a floor above that will be walked on, sufficient time MUST be left for the plaster coats to carbonate to gain sufficient strength before using the room above. This time will depend on circumstances such as time of year and ventilation but could take up to six months. This is especially true if there is any play in the joists that cannot be eradicated. If it is essential to access the room above sooner, then the first scratch coat may be double haired and could also be gauged with 10% pozzolan to get an earlier set. Even so, subsequent fitting of floorboards should be screwed rather than nailed down. A pozzolan can also be added to the top coat plaster to ensure extra durability where knocks are expected.

Quantities:

for the Example Specification per square metre

one 3mm scot coat of 3.5/1 unhaired mortar ~ 6kg/m² plus a stronger gauge of Argical than subsequent layers

one 15mm scratch coat of 3.5/1 haired mortar ~ 30kg/m²

one 10mm floated top coat of 3.5/1 unhaired mortar ~ 20kg/m² or repeat the first coat for a rough cast finish

For the very finest finish, instead of two coats of 3/2:

One coat of 3/2 lime putty plaster 4kg per m² (2mm)

One coat of Regency lime plaster 2kg per m² (1mm)

Materials:

Lime putty mortars gain added strength by carbonating over many months with atmospheric carbon dioxide. Whilst pure lime putty mortars are suitable inside or for sheltered locations, it's recommended that for exposed elevations each coat of lime mortar has a pozzolan added. These are burnt clays that react with the lime to give harder more frost resistant renders and historically ranged from volcanic ash, crushed bricks and other forms of burnt clay.

Painting:

It is important that lime renders are not totally sealed with an inappropriate paint. Limewash is the most cost effective paint to apply, offers the most traditional finish and will aid rainwater shedding . A minimum of four coats of limewash incorporating a little linseed oil should be painted on the final coat of render. Where a mixture of differing wall surfaces is to be painted it's possible that a silicate masonry paint will also be suitable but this has to be applied at least 8 weeks after the render has been applied.

Conclusions:

Lime mortars are easy to use and can readily be applied by the enthusiastic amateur given a little tuition and guidance. Although, the work needs to be carried out correctly, the beauty of the traditional building is that it rarely looks right when everything is straight and perfect, so the DIY owner can begin work comfortable in the knowledge that a certain amount of 'character' would not look out of place.

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Lightly scratch this coat with a lath or comb scratcher and leave to dry and cure until green hard. A lime mortar or plaster is green hard when it can only be marked with a metal tool. It is dry enough for any shrinkage to have taken place without having to be completely dry.

6. Curing time in between coats

All coats need to be given a few days to harden before subsequent coats are applied. To test whether a coat is 'green hard' the surface should be resistant to a fingernail. Many factors will influence the timing such as the season, exposure of wall and the thickness of the coat but it would be normal to expect a couple of days of curing time for the haired\float coat to harden and perhaps 4 - 6 days for each of the thicker coats.

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Conclusions:

Lime mortars are easy to use and can readily be applied by the enthusiastic amateur given a little tuition and guidance. Although, the work needs to be carried out correctly, the beauty of the traditional building is that it rarely looks right when everything is straight and perfect, so the DIY owner can begin work comfortable in the knowledge that a certain amount of 'character' would not look out of place.

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