

## FINISHING CONCRETE FLATWORK

### WHAT is Finishing?

Finishing is the operation of consolidating, leveling, and creating a concrete surface of a desired texture and hardness. The finish can be strictly functional or decorative.

### WHY Finish Concrete?

Finishing makes concrete attractive and serviceable. The final texture, hardness, and joint pattern on slabs, floors, sidewalks, patios, and driveways depends on the concrete's end use. Warehouse or industrial floors usually need to be level and smooth, while other interior floors that are covered with carpet do not have to be as exact. Exterior slabs must be sloped to carry away water and must provide a texture which will not be slippery when wet.

### HOW to Finish Concrete

The finishing operation should be carefully planned. Skill, knowledge, and experience are required to deal with a variety of concrete mixtures and field conditions. Having the proper manpower, equipment, and timing the operations properly for existing conditions, is critical. A slope of  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. per foot is necessary to avoid low spots and to drain water away from buildings.

Delays after the concrete arrives creates problems in finishing and can reduce final quality. Complete the excavation, compaction, form work and placement of mesh and rebars ahead of time.

Guidelines for placing and consolidating concrete are:

- a. A successful job depends on selecting the correct concrete mix for the job. Consult your Ready Mixed Concrete Producer.
- b. If possible, place concrete directly from the truck chute or use wheelbarrows, buggies or pumps to avoid excessively wet, high slump concrete. Start at the far end and work to the near end. On a slope, use stiffer concrete and work up the slope.



**Finishing Concrete Flatwork**

- c. Spread the concrete using a short-handled, square-ended shovel, a concrete rake, or a come-along. Do not use a garden rake since it will cause segregation.
- d. Tamp the concrete with a spade or 2 by 4 along the edges of the forms to release air voids and consolidate the concrete.
- e. Use a lumber or metal straightedge (called a screed) to strike off the concrete and level it. Rest the screed on edge on the top of the forms, tilt it forward and draw it across the concrete with a sawing motion. Keep a little concrete in front of the screed to fill in any low spots. (Do not use a jitterbug or vibrating screed to work up an excessive layer of mortar on the surface.)