

*MIKE'S*

# Tool Box

*Mike Forner's Home Services:*



**MY MISSION IS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY BY PROVIDING PROMPT, COMPREHENSIVE, EXPERT HOME MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS. OUR SERVICE IS A FUSION OF HIGH EXPECTATION & EXCELLENCE IN PERFORMANCE.**

### 3 Ways To Avoid Foundation Problems

Until it cracks or leaks, most of us don't think about our home's foundation. That's our first mistake. When cracks and leaks show up, you've already created or ignored problems that damage foundations.

Here are mistakes that can cause foundation woes and, if unresolved, can make matters worse.

**1. Grading gaffes:** Poor grading can direct water toward the base of your house and through foundation walls. Make sure your yard is graded at least 6 inches in 12 feet so soil slopes away from your house.

How do you check the slope? Use a level that is at least 4 ft. long. Put one end where the ground meets your foundation wall, and level the tool. Measure the space from the other end of the level to the ground. If you use a 4-foot level, multiply your findings by 3. Say you measure a 3-inch gap. That means over 12 feet, you'll have a slope of about 9 inches — good enough. If there's no space, you need to create slope.

By the way, 12 feet is enough to move water away from your foundation, even if the soil after that distance slopes back up the other way.

You may have to build up a berm, dig a trench, or install a French drain to funnel rainwater and runoff away from your home. Also, be careful when you apply mulch on foundation plants. Make sure that slopes away from your home, too.

**2. Downspout downer:** Downspouts should direct rain and roof runoff away from your house. But if you don't extend the downspout 5 to 10 feet away from the house, you'll dump water on your foundation. You can buy extenders from plain (\$15) to fancy (\$30). Or bury a long downspout diverter underground and drain the water to the curb, a storm drain, or to a spot in your yard where the water will percolate into the soil.

**3. Root riots:** Tree and shrub roots can compete with your soil for moisture during drought, causing your foundation to settle and sink unevenly. When that happens, drywall can crack and windows and doors will stick in their frames.

To prevent a war for water, plant deep-rooted trees and shrubs away from the house. If the branches touch the house, the tree is too close.

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*Stay tuned for next month's front-page article!*

## Identifying Foundation Problems

### Upcoming Events In April That Might Interest You...



\* Easter Sunday is Sunday, April 5th.



\* World Health Day is Tuesday, April 7th.



\*On Wednesday, April 15th.



\* Administrative Professionals' Day is Wednesday the 22nd. Administrative Professional's Day celebrates and gives thanks to administrative professionals including secretaries, receptionists, and office assistants.



\* On Wednesday the 22nd.

Knowing the early warning signs of foundation troubles can head off problems that ultimately could cost tens of thousands of dollars to fix. The sooner you identify potential problems, the easier — and less expensive — it is to fix them.

**The 4 Basic Indoor Warning Signs:** Houses settle over time, and a little unevenness isn't cause for panic. At the same time, you'll want to be alert to these warning signs that more dramatic changes are taking place:

- A door begins to jam or fails to latch
- Cracks appear in walls, especially over doorways, windows, or where walls meet ceilings
- Cracks open in vinyl or ceramic tile over a concrete floor
- Windows that used to open easily suddenly begin to stick or won't close completely

**Check the Outside:** Moving outside, check to see if your foundation is straight by sighting down the length of your foundation wall from each corner. The walls should be basically straight, both up and down and from side to side. Check for leaning walls with a level.

A bulge or curve in either a block foundation or a poured concrete wall could signal that the foundation has shifted, or that the soil around your foundation may be expanding and contracting, putting pressure on walls.

**Probe Concrete for Weakness:** If your house has a poured perimeter foundation and the concrete appears to be chipping and flaking, poke it in a few places with a sturdy screwdriver. The concrete should be so hard that you can't damage it.

If you manage to chip it or break a piece off, the concrete could be deteriorating because the mix contained dirty or salty sand, or too much water. This problem, common in homes built in the early 1900s in some parts of the country, has no remedy short of a new foundation.

**Checking Structural Components:** Foundation systems have other members besides the perimeter foundation wall. In your basement or crawl space, look for posts and concrete supports, or piers. Posts should stand straight and be firmly planted underneath the beams they support. Bottoms of posts should rest firmly on concrete piers.

You shouldn't find puddles or see framing that's wet. Check for rot by probing wood posts with a screwdriver or awl.

Puddles and other signs of moisture in a crawl space may indicate poor drainage around the perimeter foundation. Be sure that gutters aren't plugged, and that soil slopes away from the foundation at the rate of 6 inches for every 10 horizontal feet.

**Reading Foundation Cracks:** As concrete cures, it shrinks slightly. Where the concrete can't shrink evenly, it tends to crack. Concrete and block foundations usually have at least a few cracks. The trick is recognizing which are insignificant and which are serious. Here's a list from least to most serious:

- **Hairline cracks in the mortar** between concrete blocks are rarely worth worrying about.
- **Cracks at an L-shape section**, such as where a foundation steps down to follow a hillside, are probably shrinkage cracks, especially if they meander and taper down to a hairline. These aren't a structural issue, though you might need to plug them to keep the basement or crawl space dry.
- **Stair-step cracks in masonry joints** are a bigger concern, especially if the wall is bulging or the crack is wider than 1/8 inch.
- **Horizontal cracks** are most serious. It may be that water-saturated soil froze and expanded, pushing in and breaking the foundation. Or, you may have soil that expands when damp and shrinks when dry. The good news: this can be remedied!

## 25 Interesting Facts About The World

Facts From all-that-is-interesting.com



1. *In a Statue dedicated to a person:*
  - *If the horse has both front legs in the air, the person died in battle*
  - *If the horse has one front leg in the air, the person died as a result of wounds received in battle*
  - *If the horse has all four legs on the ground, the person died of natural causes*
2. There are more life forms on your skin than there are people on the planet
3. *Leonardo Da Vinci could write with one hand and draw with the other at the same time.*
4. If you were to remove all of the empty space from the atoms that make up every human on earth, the entire world population could fit into an apple.
5. *Dueling is legal in Paraguay as long as both parties are registered blood donors.*
6. Caterpillars completely liquefy as they transform into moths.
7. *There are over 200 corpses on Mount Everest and they are used as waypoints for climbers.*
8. When adjusted for inflation, John D. Rockefeller is the richest man in history of the world with a net worth 10 times more than Bill Gates.
9. *Dr. Seuss wrote "Green Eggs And Ham" to win a bet against his publisher who thought that he could not complete a book with only 50 words.*
10. There are more possible iterations of a game of chess than there are atoms in the known universe.
11. *The chance of you dying on the way to get lottery tickets is actually greater than your chance of winning.*
12. A hummingbird weighs less than a penny.
13. *When St. Louis held the 1904 summer Olympic games, events included greased pole climbing, rock throwing & mud fighting.*
14. The Average person walks the equivalent of three times around the world in a lifetime.
15. *After racking up \$40 in late fees for a VHS, Reed Hastings was inspired to start Netflix.*
16. Guinness Book of Records holds the record for being the book most stolen from public libraries.
17. *A frozen lobster can come back to life when thawed.*
18. Men are 6 times more likely to be struck by lightning than women.
19. *Fortune cookies are actually an American invention - Charles Jung created them in 1918.*
20. You are more likely to die from a falling coconut than a shark attack.
21. *A shark can detect one part of blood in 100 million parts of water.*
22. Coca-Cola would be green if coloring wasn't added to it.
23. *Two-thirds of the people on earth have never seen snow.*
24. A "jiffy" is an actual unit of time for 1/100<sup>th</sup> of the second.
25. *In an average NFL football game, there are only about 12 minutes of actual playtime.*



## Quick BBQ Sauce Recipe



### **Ingredients:**

- 1 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

### **Directions:**

1. Combine all ingredients in a small saucepan. Cook over low heat for 3 to 5 minutes.
2. Baste the meat, chicken, or seafood with the sauce during the last 10 minutes of grilling.

## How To Become A Better Listener: Part 1

Research reveals that we tend to remember just 25 percent of what we hear. Developing the ability to listen, *really* listen, helps to build strong social and professional relationships as well as memory. Read on to find out how to become a better listener.

### **Part 1 of 2: Listening Actively**

**Look at the speaker.** There's nothing that more quickly signals "I'm not paying attention" than staring over someone's head. Make eye contact to illustrate your respect and attention.

Some people feel uncomfortable making "too much eye contact." Looking somewhere nearby, like between the eyes or at the nose is a good way to train yourself to make eye contact.

**Show that you're listening.** Nod periodically. Smile. Small words like "yes" and "right" will show that you're engaged in the conversation, that you're listening, and that you wish for the speaker to continue.

**"Listen" to body language.** A great deal of communication happens through body position and movement. Pay attention to the signals the person gives you. Car accidents are no joke, but if a story about a recent fender-bender is being told with bright eyes, grins, and wild gestures, it's a good indication that the story is supposed to be funny.

Also pay attention to your own body language as a listener. If you're grinning during a sad story, or if you're slouched with your arms crossed, it communicates that you're unattached from the conversation and focused on yourself. Sit up, lean forward, and make eye contact.

Stay tuned...



## *Wise Home Owner Tip:*

### **How To: Clean A Down Comforter**

**STEP 1:** First things first, load the comforter into the washing machine. Next, add in a mild soap or, better yet, a soap specially formulated for down—yes, such things exist! Avoid using standard laundry detergent. What you'd normally use to clean your clothing would, if used on a down comforter, strip away the natural oils that are responsible for making the feathers so exceptionally light and delightfully fluffy.

**STEP 2:** Set the washer to run with warm water on a delicate cycle. If there's an extra rinse option, enable it. If there isn't, that's OK; you'll simply need to run the comforter through a separate rinse cycle manually. No matter how you achieve it, the extra rinse is needed to remove soap residue from the down.

**STEP 3:** Immediately transfer the comforter to a high-capacity dryer. Set the dryer to operate on low heat, and toss in either dryer balls or clean white socks stuffed with tennis balls. Yet another option is to periodically remove the comforter from the dryer and give it a vigorous shake. All three methods perform the same important function, which is to prevent the down from clumping.

**STEP 4:** As the comforter dries, be sure to check on it every now and again, particularly at the beginning of the cycle. There is a danger of the comforter overheating, in which case the fabric could either melt or get burned. If you notice the comforter sticking to the interior walls of the dryer, stop the machine, remove the bedding, and hand-fluff it before continuing.

**STEP 5:** Keep the comforter in the dryer until it is bone-dry and the down has returned to being soft and fluffy. This may take several hours. Resist the temptation to take the comforter out of the dryer before it's completely dry. Doing so would, at best, compromise the bedding's insulating power and, at worst, encourage the growth of mold and mildew.

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### **Did You Know...**

That using abrasive cleaners or tools on porcelain tile and bathtubs is a mistake? Abrasives will remove stubborn dirt, but will also dull the finish. Try using a soft cloth and a non-abrasive liquid or powder cleaner such as baking soda. Your tile and tub will thank you.

### Uplifting Quote of The Month

*"We can complain because rosebushes have thorns or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses."*

*~ Abraham Lincoln*

And Now Some Chuck Norris Jokes...

Fear of spiders is called Arachnophobia, fear of tight spaces is called Claustrophobia, and fear of Chuck Norris is called Logic.

Chuck Norris has a grizzly bear carpet in his room. The bear isn't dead it's just afraid to move.

Chuck Norris destroyed the periodic table, because he only recognizes the element of surprise.