

BRICK SLIPS – FIXING (Other than in Panel Systems)

INTRODUCTION

Brick slips can be used to facilitate the achievement of certain architectural details, or to provide a brick veneer to structures of other materials. They are often used internally to provide an attractive, low maintenance finish but this note is mainly concerned with the more rigorous requirements of external application, exposed to the weather. Fixing may be by a combination of mechanical support and adhesive mortars or, in increasing situations, by adhesive alone.

MATERIALS

TYPES OF SLIP

Slips can be made either by wire cutting from an extruded column of clay before firing or by saw cutting from standard bricks. This latter method has the advantage of the ability to vary thickness within reason to suit the application. It is also a practical means of producing slips from hand-made and stock type moulded bricks. Corner units can also be produced and this results in aesthetically effective repairs to damaged bricks in existing buildings as well as claddings to various substrates.

BS 4729-*Specification for Bricks of Special Shapes and Sizes* lists various standard thickness of slips.

TYPES OF ADHESIVE

Although some manufacturers specialise in one type of material whilst others provide a range of types, available adhesives/mortars generally fall into the following categories for fixing to concrete substrates: -

1. Sand/Portland cement mortar

Conventional sand/cement mortar is not recommended for slip fixing. Adequate bond strength will rarely be attained and will be much affected by the suction rate of the particular slip and of the substrate.

2. As above modified by the addition of Styrene Butadiene Rubber (SBR)

SBR- modified mortar is available in pre-packaged form, which should reduce the possibility of site mixing errors of the 3 components. The use of such materials is well documented and established and very high bond strengths are achievable if the correct procedures are followed.

3. Epoxy and polyester resin based systems.

These are capable of developing bond strengths of the high level usually associated with these materials. They have the advantage of rapid hardening but will normally need support until the initial cure has taken place. They tend to be expensive, relatively difficult to work and unsuitable for thick beds. They can also be temperature sensitive and liable to give poor strength if used beyond the optimum period after mixing.

4. Cement based adhesives.

These are capable of bond strengths nearly as high as Epoxy or Polyester materials. They are perhaps the most straightforward to use with little scope for error and good initial grab, reducing or eliminating the need for support. They also have working characteristics more similar to those of normal mortar.

5. Rubber latex based material.

Latex based materials are useful for applications where a degree of movement and vibration is anticipated, as they remain flexible when set. Tensile failure loads will tend to be lower than with other adhesives due to the low cohesive strength of the material itself, but this flexibility can be a distinct advantage in certain situations since forces are not passed directly back to the substrate. This type is relatively easy to mix and work and is particularly useful for application internally to timber surfaces.

6. Silicone based adhesives.

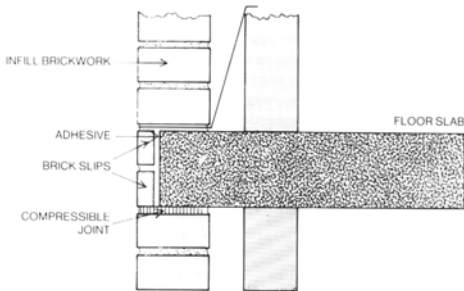
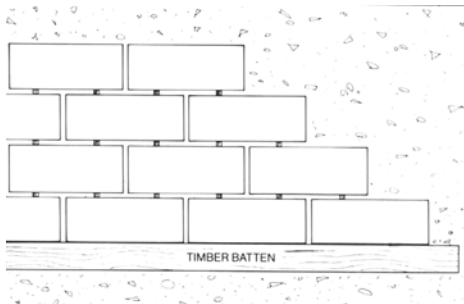
Used with various proprietary brick slip systems. Obviously, the suppliers preferred method of working should be closely followed and the adhesive used be suitable for the application in question.

The use of pre-assembled panels will often be preferable to individual slip fixing on site although the latter offers greater flexibility. In this case, site pointing will enable a uniform appearance to be achieved, avoiding a stitching effect between panels.

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Many adhesive companies offer technical advice on which product is best for any given application. It is important that their advice is sought. Ibstock Technical Services can supply manufacturers contact details on request. Regardless of which type of adhesive is chosen, the following points must be observed during fixing: -

1. The general level of workmanship and supervision needs to be of a high standard.
2. The substrate to receive the slips must be clean, dry and free from dust, mould, and oil or, in the case of concrete, loose surface laitance.
3. Nearly all adhesive systems require some form of support until the initial set has taken place. Subsequent courses may be conveniently spaced by fillets of mortar between the slips, or plastic/wooden spacers may be used. Final pointing, after the adhesive has set, should be in normal sand/cement mortar to match the in-situ brickwork but modified mortars are available for use with proprietary gun-applied systems.



4. With most adhesive types, the slips should be 'buttered' with the mix over the whole rear face to avoid any voids in the bed in which water could collect and force off the slips under freezing conditions. Proprietary systems may have different arrangements and be applied by a gunning arrangement to the substrate.

5. The permissible bed thickness will vary with different systems and the manufacturers recommendations must always be followed. If differences of line occur requiring a greater thickness than that recommended, an initial render coat of the adhesive may be required. Specific advice on this matter should be sought from the manufacturers. In general 6mm represents a normal bed thickness with most adhesives, although most can be used at up to 12mm in small areas.

6. Manufacturers instructions and advice should be strictly followed.

It is most important that allowance be made for both vertical and horizontal movement and that compressible joints are incorporated in the design for this purpose. This is particularly relevant to brickwork infill panels to concrete framed buildings; a compressible joint must be incorporated at the top of each storey- height panel to minimise the tendency for the slip cladding to the floor slab above being squeezed off by a compression buckling effect.

MECHANICAL SUPPORT

In certain refurbishment situations it may be necessary to use mechanical support and some authorities may insist on their use. Certainly the consequences of any slips becoming detached must always be borne in mind and appropriate safeguards used.

An information sheet is available from Ibstock Technical Services covering manufacturers of both adhesive systems and stainless steel mechanical fixings.

DIFFICULT DETAILING/SOFFIT SITUATIONS

Some design details are difficult to achieve satisfactorily by in-situ fixing. Such difficulties may be often overcome by using pre-assembled components faced with slips which can be fastened back to the rest of the frame, or be cast in as construction proceeds.

Arches can be supplied as Lightweight assemblies to any profile, constructed from brick slips bonded onto lightweight aggregate block giving an arch that is both strong and robust yet light enough to handle on site.

Pre-constructed window openings and chimneys can also be provided by using brick slips on a pre-formed substrate. Contact Ibstock for more details of the Intelligent Brickwork range covering other types of decorative details.

SPECIAL ADHESIVES & MORTARS FOR BRICK SLIP FIXINGS

ADHESIVE MORTARS

Structural Adhesives Ltd S-2184E **0116 246 0766** www.structuraladhesives.co.uk
Bushby Brook Works
16 Spence Street. Leicester. LE5 3NW

Norcros Adhesives (formerly BAL) **01782 591120** www.focus-ireland.com/norcros
Longton Road Bal-cem Gold Star
Trentham
Stoke on Trent. ST4 8JB

Ronacrete Ltd Ronafix **0208 593 7621** www.ronacrete.co.uk
Ronac House
Selinas Lane. Dagenham. Essex. RM8 1QL

SBD
Weber Building Solutions Epoxy Plus **01525 718988** www.weberbuildingsolutions.co.uk
Dickens House
Maulden Road
Flitwick. Bedford. MK45 5BY

Tecroc Polyester Mortar **01827 711755** www.tecroc.co.uk
Holly Lane Industrial Estate
Atherstone. CV92RN

Apollo Adhesives Brick slip bonding **01827 54281** www.apolloadhesives.com
Sandy Way
Amington Industrial Estate.
Tamworth, B77 4DS

METAL FIXINGS

Ancon Brick slip fixings **0114 275 5224** www.ancon.co.uk
President Way
President Park. Sheffield. S4 7UR

Halfen General metal fixings **0990 316 300** <http://www.halfen.com/>
Humphrys Road
Woodside Estate. Dunstable. LU5 4PT