

Brick

An Old, Old Story

How Does a Brick Get Its Color?

The higher the iron content in the clay, the redder the brick. Other materials such as lime and alumina, lighten the color. During the curing process, temperatures inside the kilns reach 2000 Degrees F. Higher temperatures tend to darken the brick. Color may also be affected by the presence of other minerals and even by particle sizes in the clay. Blending so many variables is part science, part art. Absolute control is virtually impossible.

Why Are There So Many Colors?

Brick plants are built near large beds of clay. No two deposits are chemically identical so the products of each plant must constantly seek new shades and blends by varying processes. The result: a rainbow of selections.

Does the Surface Color Go All the Way Through?

Not necessarily. The surface of the brick may vary slightly from the body because of its exposure to higher temperatures in the kilns. Some bricks are also given special face colors by "flashing." These will be 1/16" to 1/8" deep. Other surface coatings may be added in either liquid or powder form during the curing stage.

Will the Color Ever Fade? Can It Rub Off?

No. The surface coating becomes fused to the main body of the brick. If the color was applied dry, a bit of excess powder may rub off a new brick. That's normal and okay.

Why Are Some Bricks Different From Others in the Same Bundle?

Bricks are stacked on racks or cars designed to hold them during the firing process. A temperature variation of only 5 Degrees F can affect the finished color. Units near the top will be subjected to conditions slightly different from those at the bottom: front placement varies from back. During this crucial stage, other minor changes occur. Even length may be

affected. Units that receive the most heat can become shorter.

If Bricks Are So Strong, Why Do They Chip So Easily?

There is more than one kind of strength. A brick is so dense it can support a great amount of weight. But because it is made by firing clay at high temperatures, much the same way that pottery is glazed, the brick has a slightly brittle surface that can chip if struck by another hard object.

What Causes Some Bricks to Warp? Why Can't They All Be Straight and Precise?

Sixteen tons of bricks may be stacked on a single kiln car. Under that much weight and at the high temperatures reached during firing, some pieces, especially those near the bottom, become somewhat plastic. Edges may twist or curl, whole units may buckle or warp.

My Salesman Told Me That Even If Five Percent of the Brick on My Job Are Bad, I Still Have To Pay For Them. True? Why?

The brick is a product made with natural ingredients taken from the earth and cured at 2000 Degrees F. A small percentage of units can reasonably be expected to be unstable. Bricks are bundled and strapped together at the factory and set on the storage yard. Next they're placed on trucks, hauled to a distributor's location, and set on the yard. Then they're loaded for a local delivery and set on your job. And finally, unless your bricks are unloaded near the wall, your mason will have to move them a fourth time. The more times a brick is handled, the higher the risk of chipping it, especially at the job site where special handling equipment may not be available.

Most industries either set their own standards or acceptable quality for their products or abide by standards established by outside authorities. In the case of the brick industry, ASTM, C-216 sets the standard at 5 percent.

When I Order Brick From a Sample, Will The Brick They Send Be Exactly The Same?

Often people are surprised to learn that absolute consistency is virtually impossible in the brick manufacturing process. Every run varies somewhat due to subtle variations in the raw materials. It can't be helped, and understanding that helps us avoid setting unrealistic expectations. Paint can be matched almost exactly to the color you want. Clay cannot. That's part of its charm. It's a

natural product. Trees differ too. No two boards are alike, but we don't expect them to be.

Is It Hard To Match New Brick to Old?

If many years have passed since the first construction, it's possible that the original manufacturer won't be able to produce a close match. Another manufacturer may even have something that does the job better. Matching new brick to old is an art that requires the service of someone with broad product knowledge.

Will They Ever Discontinue Making My Brick?

There is a better than fifty percent chance that your brick will one day be discontinued. There is probably a ninety-nine percent chance that you really don't care. If it's brick for your house, the odds are heavily against your ever building on. But you do need to know that brick manufactures, like most other manufactures, reserve the right to change "models" from time to time. Cars change. Wallpaper changes. Floor tile, carpet, drapery material all change. So does brick.

Why Does the Cost of Bricks Vary So Much?

Raw materials are the first consideration. Most of them are mined close to the plant, but mining is expensive, and sometimes it is necessary to haul in certain materials from other locations, an additional expense.

Making brick is hard work. It takes a lot of people to run even the most modern plants, so the cost of labor is another significant part of your brick.

Only so much weight can be put in a rail car or on a flatbed, and bricks are heavy. The selection you make may have been manufactured hundreds of miles away so the cost of shipping can become a significant part of the total price to you.



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