



# Home Tips®



• CHRISTIAN BUILDING INSPECTORS, INC., 1003 STAR COURT, NORCROSS, GEORGIA 30093, (770) 925-8518 • MAY 1994 •

## Q & A

### Removing Mortar From Brick?

*Is there a way to remove the excess mortar from the face of bricks?*

There are quite a few brick-cleaning products on the market, but good, old muriatic acid, available at most hardware stores, will work just fine.

First, you need to protect shrubs and plants around the area. Cover them with plastic. Use duct tape and plastic to protect any wood or metal trim and fixtures that could accidentally get acid on them.

Using a stiff-blade putty knife, knock off as much mortar as you can without damaging the brick. Now mix a solution of one part muriatic acid to ten parts water. Always pour the acid into the water, not the water into the acid.

Wear goggles, a long sleeved shirt and rubber gloves when using this solution. Thoroughly wet the brick with a garden hose, then dip a stiff, non-metal, bristle brush into the acid-solution and scrub the mortar off the brick. The acid will start to work immediately, but it will take some elbow grease to get the mortar off. Once the mortar is removed, immediately rinse the brick with water.

A few words of caution: Don't use a wire brush or a wire wheel attached to an electric drill. You will damage the brick. Don't use a stronger acid solution than the one we recommend. Also remember that with your shrubs covered, they could overheat and die if left under the plastic too long.

### Removing Carpet Glue From Wood Floors?

*What is the easiest way to remove glue and old carpet backing from a hardwood floor?*

Unfortunately, there isn't an easy way to remove this stuff. Randy Prewitt, director of technical services for the National Wood Flooring Assoc., says you will have to sand and refinish the floor. Do not use any solvents or wire brushes.

First, remove as much of the backing as you can using a rented industrial-size buffer with a Scotch-Brite pad. It takes a while to learn how to control a floor buffer, so start in the center of the room and go easy until you get a feel for the machine. Have a helper vacuum up the loose backing as you go. Buffers rent for about \$30.00 to \$40.00 a day plus the pad.

go. Buffers rent for about \$30.00 to \$40.00 a day plus the pad. You could use a rented floor sander instead, but you will go through a lot of expensive sandpaper. However, once the backing is removed, you can go to work on the glue with a floor sander.

Use 36-grit sandpaper to remove the glue, stains and gouges from the floor. Follow this with 60-grit sandpaper, and for the final pass, use 100-grit. Floor sanders rent for about the same as a floor buffer.

A caution about laminated flooring: The veneer is only 1/8" thick at most, so be careful when you sand it. Some parquet floors, and strip flooring that is more than 3" wide, are probably laminated. You have no way of telling if the floor is laminated unless you can find an exposed section of the floor, such as around floor registers that are cut into the floor. If the laminated floor has been sanded once before, chances are there isn't enough hardwood veneer left to withstand another sanding. In that case you are looking at replacing the floor or covering it with carpet again.

### Removing Paint Off Stucco?

*Can you tell us how to remove paint splatters from our stucco siding?*

Any commercial paint remover can be used to remove paint from stucco. Dab the paint remover on the spot with a small paint brush or rag. The paint removers with a jelly like consistency are easier to work with since they will not run down the wall as easily as thinner ones. Make sure you cover the area below the paint splatters with plastic and wear rubber gloves. Follow the label directions carefully and always try any cleaning procedure in a small inconspicuous area first.

Do not use acid to remove paint from stucco because it will damage the stucco.

### Stuck Windows?

*We have several windows that have been painted shut. Do you have any ideas on how to open these windows without destroying them?*

Yes, you can use a little tool called a paint zipper, found at most hardware stores and paint stores for around \$2.00. Or sometimes you can slide a utility knife between the window and the casing and work the window loose.

Remember, anything painted prior to the early '70's will probably have lead paint on it. Avoid creating dust. Do not sand these surfaces.

