

## DIY TIPS

# Your *Easy Equipment Guide* to effectively mix concrete

2 minute read

For the construction contractor and home-based builder, having the right equipment in your cement and concrete mix toolbox will help you get your DIY job started and completed more smoothly. In this article we give you a list of the tools of the trade to get you all the way from mixing to finishing.

### Gear yourself up right from the start

Put on protective gear (PPE) in the form of an overall, dust mask and safety glasses. The mask helps to stop you inhaling the fine cement dust as you measure out the cement powder while safety glasses keep any splash of concrete from getting in your eyes.

Steel capped boots are a *nice to have* in your gear, particularly if you are on a building site and rubble is lying around, but if steel capped boots are not in your budget, you can wear rubber boots.

Add in rubber gloves to your gear as cement can be harsh on your hands. There are different contractor-grade gloves for concrete work made from a range of materials including latex and rubberised cotton. Some are even designed for maximum puncture resistance.

### Now get going on your concrete mix

Let's start with the essentials.

You will need a **builders shovel**. Rather than the rounded garden version, choose the square-ended ones that are not too deep. This basic tool is so underrated in importance as it comes in handy at every stir and churn when making and laying your concrete.

Stack up your bucket stock with at least **three 10L buckets** as you will need one for water, a second for cement and your third bucket for sand/stone. We prefer the triangular pouring buckets over the round generic ones for ease of pouring, but either will work for the purposes of transferring your concrete mix to where you need to place it.

Then pull in with **polythene sheeting** or construct a mixing box with plywood or shutterboard to keep your working and mixing area free from debris and other unnecessary grit. Go for heavy 1 200 gauge polythene sheeting which is used as damp proofing under concrete. The other option is to mix your cement in a **wheelbarrow** but many builders find the sheeting gives them more space and flexibility.

You can also hire a **portable petrol or electric mixer** which gives you a great tool in which to mix small amounts of concrete on a bigger job site. There are different sizes of these mixers with some units even fitting in the back of a bakkie. Mixers are great because they blend the water, cement mix and sand/stone to give you a consistent concrete.

### **Move on to laying your concrete just right**

For the ultimate professional concrete finish, head to your hardware store for a screed, laser level, vapor barrier, and floats and possibly consider a walk-behind trowel, groove cutters and edgers as well as polishers and grinders.

You will use a **screed** to smooth and/or roughly level wet concrete straight after you have placed it. What is important about the screed that you choose is that it must be longer than the width of the concrete form with which you are working.

A **laser level** sends a beam of light to provide a straight level or plumb line. This is the standard tool that you will use for levelling forms, setting their elevation, and it is handy for checking and establishing the height of embedded pieces, such as bolts and other anchors. It is preferable to a traditional string line because it never gets in the way and it can remain true over a long distance.

**Vapor barriers** are also known as retarders or called **damp course** in South Africa. This important equipment helps you to stop moisture from evaporating from your concrete surfaces, which is important because it maintains the strength of the concrete mix. Place these damp course barriers before you pour the concrete to prevent water being absorbed into the soil if you are casting at ground level.

There are also speciality tools such as polishers and grinders that are used for the likes of floor polishing and countertop fabrication that you can shop around for to include in your toolbox. **Groove cutters and edgers** are used by construction contractors for the likes of creating control joints on residential slabs and walkways or to split up your concrete floor into pieces for ease of pouring.

One of your most helpful tools in your Easy Equipment toolbox is the [Sephaku Cement calculator](#). This enables you to calculate the right ratio and quantities of your materials needed for a successful concrete mix for your build project. After all, good planning of your equipment gives you the best chance to get the best out of your choice in cement.

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