

# Garage Floor Coatings 101

*“What you need to know before you do your project”*



## Professional Flooring Contractor Shares Secrets To A Successful Garage Floor Coating Project

Picking the right flooring for your garage can be tough. There are a lot more options than you probably realize. Plus, there is a whole pile of misinformation to contend with thanks to the internet making everyone an expert.

I learned those lessons quickly. And I've been on both sides of the equation...As a customer and also as a professional floor coating installer. I've seen other homeowners learn all of those lessons the hard way.

So that's why I've created this handy guide! I'm going to show you exactly what I would want if I were having a garage floor coating installed in my garage. This is the exact process we walk each of our customers through. And the suggestions mentioned here are exactly what we do for every single garage floor coating install in order to achieve the best possible results.



There are FOUR things that to me are really important factors well beyond the bounds of preference. Those three things are...

1. Floor Prep
2. Quality of the Floor Coating
3. Cure Time
4. Warranties & Assurances

And properly preparing a garage floor to receive a floor coating is definitely the one I take the most seriously. Floor prep will in most cases make the difference between a floor that lasts and a floor that fails.

But I digress...We're not going to talk about floor prep just yet...

First, we'll discuss the other three...Cure Time, Warranties & Assurances, and Quality of the Floor Coating.

#### *Cure Time*

The amount of time it takes for a floor coating to harden is known as the cure time. Basically, the cure time is how long it takes for you to be able to walk and drive on a newly installed floor coating.

Cure times will vary widely depending on the type of coating you're using. There are epoxy coatings that can take as long as two weeks to cure and some that only require a few hours.



I would definitely go with something that only requires a few hours to cure. Like me, I'm sure you don't want the contents of your garage spilled out onto your driveway and / or front yard for more than a day. And there's no way you should have to rent space to store stuff until the garage floor coating cures.

Something with a few hours cure time will allow me full use of my garage again within 24 hours. I can live with that...

#### *Warranties and Assurances*

This one is pretty cut and dry...

Epoxy floor coatings are tricky and even a professional can have a floor failure. But the great thing about working with a professional is they'll make it right.

How a company responds after a screw up is what separates the professionals from the amateurs. Most floor coating professionals will offer some sort of warranty and assurances against failure. But that is not



to say you should hire just any flooring contractor offering a lifetime warranty. It is important to do your research to find a reputable and well established floor company in your area.



Experience, stability, and reputation are very important here. This is a major investment that will be difficult to alter after it has been installed. A five, ten, twenty, or even lifetime warranty is great, but a company needs to have history and a good reputation to insure they will be around to honor any promise made to you.

#### *Quality of the Floor Coating*

Professional floor coating contractors use various types of epoxy. Which one is best can be left to debate but there are certainly particular factors you'll want to pay attention to.

A coating with little to no solvent or water carrier agent is preferred. Those coatings usually have a very short pot life but the average floor should only require one coating of the epoxy and they generally have a high abrasion resistance.



There are also coatings available that do not yellow from UV rays and can be applied to floors when the temperature isn't ideal. Some coatings can be applied to floors with very small cracks to form a uniform surface.

#### *Floor prep*

A key component to the success of any paint or coating installation is the floor prep. It is a long, meticulous process that requires a high degree of attention to detail.

First, the concrete needs to be thoroughly cleaned of dirt, grease, and grime before the coating can be applied. Most garage floors will also have a sealant that needs to be removed before applying any coating. Next, cracks and pits should be filled and repaired so the coating will yield a clean, smooth surface.

Finally, Depending on the floor coating manufacturer and their installation recommendations, an acid etch may meet the requirements of the coating manufacturer followed by a commercial high strength primer. Others manufacturers require the pores of the concrete to be opened up to create the proper profile required for the coating to achieve a good bond with the floor. In many cases, Professional flooring contractors will use heavy machinery to diamond grind or shot blast the concrete. This is the best way to grind the floor to the right profile.



## Would this be a good DIY project?

That's a great question! And I'm glad you asked...

To be quite candid with you, this really isn't a great DIY project for the average homeowner.

Can you go to the big box store, buy a kit, and have your floor coated in a couple days? Sure!

Are you going to be happy with that decision a little ways down the line? There's no guarantee...

So why do I recommend you don't do this job yourself?

For one thing, most of the DIY kits sold in box stores will offer some kind of limited warranty against manufacturer defect. But good luck trying to prove the product is defective to the manufacturer. Unless you video document your entire floor prep process, the failure can quickly be explained away by the manufacturer.

For another thing, most DIY floor kits will take at least 5 days to fully cure; and, depending on the kit, that could get stretched out to as many as 14 days. That's a pretty long time to not have use of your garage. Where are you supposed to keep all your stuff?

For a third thing, most all of the paints and coatings that are sold as DIY kits will be water based epoxies. Basically, water is used as a carrier agent for the epoxy to increase the pot life (the amount of time you have to work with the epoxy material before it dries).

The biggest downside to a water based epoxy is most of the water will evaporate after the floor dries leaving you with a very thin layer of epoxy. The quality of the finished floor will really depend on how well it was prepped and what you intend to use your garage for.

And when it comes to floor prep...Forget about it! Most DIY box store kits will provide or recommend a simple acid etch. The acid etch solution should be enough to get the floor cleaned and at it may be

enough to remove the sealant as well. You'd definitely have to do a thorough check before beginning the coating application process though.



The more important thing that the acid etch doesn't do very well is give the concrete the right profile to receive the coating. The proper profile can be had only by opening up the pores of the concrete. And this is accomplished by breaking up the top layer of concrete a bit using a diamond grinder or shot blaster. Remember, this is probably the most important aspect of the prep process, as it will play an overwhelming role in how well the coating sticks to the floor.

If you've never worked with an epoxy floor coating before and if you've never operated a diamond grinder or shot blaster, PLEASE save yourself both time and money. Have your garage floor coating installed by a professional.

And just how are you supposed to go about finding a pro? Well, that's another great question...

## The Simple 3 Step Process To Finding A Pro

Finding an established, reputable, and honest local company can be time consuming but it doesn't need to be complicated. To help you find a worthwhile flooring contractor, we have developed the following 3 step process.

*Step One: Establish that the company has experience and stability*

This one should be a no-brainer. If a company has not been around for a while, how can you ensure they will be around to stand by the warranty they are offering you? It is important to know how long any professional you intend to hire has been in business under their current name.

All it takes is a string of floor failures to drive a company out of business. Look for a company that has been around for five or more years. In the present economic climate, that sort of stability is tell-tale. Having a storefront, showroom, or physical location is also a good sign of stability.

You should also search for the company locally through the Better Business Bureau and gather as much information as you can online through online reviews.

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### *Step Two: Set up an interview*

When you have narrowed the list down to only those companies that have a proven record of stability, you should speak with them to learn more about their experience. Ask questions like:

- How many (type of floor you are considering) floors have you installed?
- How many have you installed in the past year?
- Can I have 5 of your customer references from the past year?
- Have you ever made a mistake or had a floor failure? (Hint: Everyone makes mistakes. If someone says no they are either lying or do not have enough experience to pull from.)
- How do you handle mistakes and floor failures? May I contact one of your customers who experienced the mistake or whose floor failed?

### *Step Three: Contact the references*

If you really want to know that you are dealing with a reputable company, it is important to speak with some of their past customers. This can be a bit time consuming but we are also talking about a pretty significant investment here. So pick your top two or three finalists and:

- Contact a mix of old and new customers to determine their service and how the product performs over time.
- Connect with references that have a garage similar to yours and installed the same flooring that you are considering.
- Definitely call customers that had failed floors or experienced mistakes. Find out how the contractor fixed things and if the customer was satisfied.

Now that you've completed all your detective work, all that's left to do is pick the most qualified floor coating company. All things being equally good go with your gut. It usually gets it right.

You should be ready to make a well informed overall decision! I wish you the best of luck with your garage floor coating project!