



# Guide for Polishing LATICRETE® Self-Leveling Overlayment TDS 238

To polish LATICRETE® Self-leveling overlayments (SLO) and other toppings, there are several methods and techniques that can be used to achieve the same or similar results. Each experienced contractor will have their own process and sequence with their own equipment and tooling. Additionally, diamond tooling and equipment manufacturers will have their own recommended tooling and sequence for polishing SLO. Some manufacturers have designed tooling specifically for grinding and polishing SLO. LATICRETE has teamed up with several tooling and equipment manufacturers to refine our polishing process. Consult with consulting LATICRETE as well as your tooling and equipment manufacturer prior to grinding and polishing SLO.

A large mockup (20'x20' {6.1x6.1m}) should be installed to determine the process, ensure the intended appearance and performance can be achieved, and set the client expectations. Smaller sized mock-ups may not allow enough space for large equipment to effectively produce realistic repeatable results.

## Install LATICRETE® Self-Leveling Overlayments

- Mix and install epoxy primer per product data sheet instruction over concrete per normal installation instructions using NXT Epoxy Primer with sand broadcast, [VAPOR BAN Primer ER](#) with sand broadcast, [NXT Vapor Reduction Coating](#), or [SUPERCAP Moisture Vapor Control](#) with sand broadcast. Refer to TDS 230 for detailed substrate preparation and primer information.
- When installing a LATICRETE SLO over STRATA\_MAT (minimum ½" {12mm} pour thickness) or STRATA\_HEAT Mat (Minimum ¾" {19mm} pour thickness) refer to product data sheet [DS 026.0](#) or [DS 026.1](#) respectively for more detailed information regarding the proper installation of these mats. Note that no primer will be used when installing a LATICRETE SLO over STRATA\_MAT or STRATA\_HEAT Mat. Also note that if moisture mitigation coating is required it must be installed under STRATA\_MAT or STRATA\_HEAT Mat.
- Mix and install LATICRETE SLO per product data sheet. Use the lower to mid-range water ratio listed on the product data sheet. This will help minimize the surface cream thickness and the depth of grinding to expose the aggregate later.
  - Use a [LATICRETE Gauge rake](#) to set depth at a minimum of ½" (12 mm).
  - For uneven concrete floors, a thicker SLO installation may be required so that high spots in the concrete are not exposed during the grinding process.
  - Keep a wet edge on the floor when mixing and pouring SLO to help reduce visible pour lines in the polished floor.
  - Use a smoothing trowel perpendicular to the direction of the gauge rake to reduce ridge lines, trowel marks, break surface tension, and help remove air bubbles.
    - It is important to note that SLOs will develop a cream on the surface. When cured the cream becomes a thin skin. As with most cement products the cream/skin will become thicker each time the surface is touched with a finishing tool such as gage rakes, trowel, etc. Thicker skin will require deeper and more aggressive grinding to expose aggregate.
    - Best practice is to touch the surface as few times as possible during install to help minimize cream/skin thickness.
    - Using a spike roller will tend push aggregate away from the surface and will result in a thicker cream/skin which will required grinding deeper into the surface to expose the aggregate. A spike roller can also leave deep roller marks which will be visible in the surface of the polished topping.
  - Adding aggregate – Note that aggregate must be decided upon during mockup. Typically, terrazzo aggregates size #2 - #4 can be used. Test these during mockup to determine what works best for your project.
    - Seed / Broadcast aggregate shortly after smoothing trowel is used but before skin begins to form on the self-leveling.
    - Choose aggregate types and sizes that will not sink too far below the surface of your self-leveling. If aggregate sinks below the intended grind/cut depth it will not be exposed and visible after grinding.

- When aggregate is broadcast into the surface or mixed integrally allow a minimum of 24-hour drying time prior to first grind. The extra cure time will allow more strength to develop and help prevent aggregate from rolling out during the grinding stage.
- Typically, the first grind can begin after approximately 12 hours after install depending on pour depth and drying conditions. Grinding can begin sooner when drying / curing conditions allow.
- Note that a more aggressive method and heavier equipment may be needed to cut the surface as strength develops. Also note that grinding too soon could cause damage to the surface.

### **Cut Joints**

- Prior to cutting joints, allow SLO to cure for a minimum of 3 hours, and surface is walkable. Joints should be installed prior to grinding.
- Trace previously marked substrate joints. Cut into the concrete substrate joint through the full depth of the SLO.

### **Fill Joints per [L&M™ JOINT TITE 750™](#) installation instructions.**

- Allow the self-leveling overlayment to dry for a minimum of 24 hours prior to filling joints.
- Vacuum/air blast to clean out new cut joints completely leaving no loose dust or debris. Do not use water.
- Protect surface adjacent to the joint from staining caused by product overflow with stain protector.
- Install L&M JOINT TITE 750 joint filler overfilling the joint slightly by approximately 1/16" (1.5 mm). Excessive overfill will waste product and may cause surface staining.
- After 45 minutes, trim excess joint filler using a new 8" (200mm) razor scrapper to create a flat, smooth joint.

### **Grinding Stage: 16 - 100 Grit Metal Bond**

Removing the Skin.

- Dry grind only. Do not wet grind.
- The Grinding stage will typically remove 1/16" – 1/4" (1.5 – 6 mm) of the surface. To polish the surface without removing the skin, skip the Grinding and Honing stages and proceed to the Polishing section below.
- Prior to starting and stopping the machine, head pressure should be relieved to reduce the occurrence of deep start and stop scratches. These scratches can be difficult to remove later in the process.
- First attempt at cutting/grinding the surface will determine the diamond tool steps needed. Typically, a 40-grit metal bond diamond will cut the surface within 24 hours of install. As the surface gains strength over time and/or if aggregate needs to be exposed, a more aggressive grit and heavier equipment may be needed to cut through the surface skin and expose the aggregate.
- Once the first grind diamond tooling has been determined, spend a large amount of time on grinding and cutting through the skin. Multiple passes should be made in a north to south then east to west fashion. Multiple passes will be needed to grind deep enough so that the surface skin, gauge rake/smoothing marks and low spots removed and aggregates are exposed. Continue to grind until consistent aggregate exposure has been achieved.
- Sweep/Vacuum clean and inspect prior to each diamond grit change.
- Continue to grind using higher grit metal bond diamonds up to 120 grit to remove scratches created by the previous step and to smooth the surface. Multiple passes at each grit may be needed to ensure all of the previous scratches are removed.

**Grout / Skim Coat (if needed):** There are several types of products and methods for grouting available including acrylic, resinous, cementitious, etc. Contact and follow instructions from the grout manufacturer that you are using.

**Transition:** 100 - 200 grit Hybrid or transitional

- 100 - 200 grit Hybrid or transitional tools are often used to remove metal diamond scratch patterns prior to switching to resin bonds.
- This will typically require a single pass. However, multiple passes may be needed. Make multiple passes in a north to south then east to west fashion.
- When switching from hybrid or transitional to resin bond diamond tools, drop back one grit from the last metal used. For example, when transitioning from 150 Hybrid, start with 100 grit Resin.

**Honing Stage: 100-400 Grit Resin** - Some tooling manufacturers design products that are specifically for honing and polishing self-leveling products. Consult with LATICRETE or with your tooling manufacturer.

- Sweep/Vacuum clean and inspect to ensure that all previous scratches have been removed prior to each diamond grit change.
- Run your machine at a slower speed over self-leveling topping then you would over normal concrete slabs. Faster speed settings with resin bonds over self-leveling toppings could generate enough heat to burn the polymers in the topping and cause some discoloration. Also, consider removing weight from machine. At this stage additional weight could generate excess heat.
- Begin honing using 100 grit Resin. If scratches remain after the first resin pass, drop back to hybrid or transitions to remove deep scratches. Then work your way back up.
- Continue to hone using 200 grit Resin.
- Sweep/Vacuum clean and inspect to ensure that all previous scratches have been removed.
- If using a Dye apply [L&M™ VIVID DYE WB Plus™](#) prior to densifying per the data sheet instructions. Two coats are recommended however, this should be determined during the mockup.

#### **Dye and/or Densify:**

- Use dye prior to densifier when dye is specified.
- Apply a second coat of [L&M™ VIVID DYE WB Plus](#), if desired or required, prior to densifying.
- Use [L&M LION HARD®](#) lithium silicate densifier. Apply to rejection per data sheet instructions at a rate of 400-600 ft<sup>2</sup>/gallon (9.8-14.7 m<sup>2</sup>/L) using a microfiber pad keeping the surface wet for 15-20 minutes. Do not allow to puddle. Allow to dry completely.
- Continue honing using 400 grit Resin.
- Sweep/Vacuum clean and inspect to ensure that all previous scratches have been removed

#### **Polish: 800-3000 Grit Resin**

- Polish using 800 grit Resin.
- Sweep/Vacuum clean.
- Some specs may call for a second densifier application. Densify again using L&M LION HARD lithium silicate densifier. Apply to rejection per manufacturer's instructions at a rate of 600-800 ft<sup>2</sup>/gallon (14.7-19.7 m<sup>2</sup>/L) using a microfiber pad keeping the surface wet for 15-20 minutes. Do not allow to puddle. Allow to dry. Remove any residue with next polishing step.
- Continue to polish using 1500 grit Resin.
- Sweep/vacuum floor.
  - In many cases this will be the highest grit used and the specified gloss has been achieved.
- Continue to polish using 3000 grit Resin. Sweep/vacuum floor.

#### **Apply Guard (If specified)**

Once the specified gloss has been achieved use [L&M PERMAGUARD SPS™](#) per manufacturer's instructions and burnish with a 2000 RPM burnisher and a soft white or soft natural hogs hair.

Technical Data Sheets are subject to change without notice. For latest revision, check our website at <https://laticrete.com>  
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