

POINTING GUIDE

If you need to re-point an old wall (pre-1900) then you should be using a lime mortar. Old bricks and many stones are soft and the use of cement mortars will eventually destroy the structure of the wall.

Step by step guide.

Step 1

Rake out the mortar joints to a depth approximately equal to twice the width. Brush any loose material away.

Step 2

Damp down the brickwork and the mortar joints.

It is very important that the wall is damp.

That may mean spraying (we use plant sprayers) and letting it soak in for a few hours. If your wall is very dry it is wise to spray it the day before as well. This helps to prevent the mortar from drying too quickly, helping it to bond better without cracking.

Knock up your mortar.

If you have premixed coarse stuff (1 part lime putty to 3 parts well graded sharp sand) then remove any excess water on top of the mortar and tip the mortar out onto a wooden board (allowing any excess water to soak away). Knock up the mortar well to make it workable.

Even if it feels fairly dry and stiff to begin with, persevere and only when you feel yourself getting really tired should you add a small amount of extra water. Too much water in the mortar increases natural shrinkage and can lead to cracking.

Lime mortar is a thixotropic material – the more you work it, the softer and wetter it becomes.

Step 3

Put a small amount of mortar on you hawk and, using your trowel or pointing iron, work it down into a pattie approximately as tall as your mortar joints.

Chop the edge off the pattie with your trowel/pointing iron.

The mortar should be of a consistency so that about 1 inch stands off your trowel easily.

Always work towards your previous (or original) mortar, pushing the mortar firmly in place.

Use a narrow pointing iron and try to keep the mortar off the face of the bricks – any overspill (or feathers) is best left until leathery hard.

Avoid over-working the face of the mortar once it's in the wall as this may make it whiter and weaker.

Step 4

After 3-4 hours (depending on weather/temperature) the face of the mortar should be sufficiently stiff so that you cannot mark it with your thumb but you can with your nail.

Take a piece of wood that has been cut off to an angle of approximately 45 degrees and is about the same width as the joint. Run this along the joint applying constant pressure. Most of the feathers will drop off.

If you're working during the colder months, it will be necessary to cover the mortar with hessian (and maybe polythene) to prevent it being damaged by frost attack. It's also advisable to cover mortar (with damp hessian) on hot or windy days as these elements can dry it too quickly – leading to cracking and weak mortar.

Use a stiff brush (scrubbing or churn brush) to brush off the remaining feathers and then stipple/tamp the surface of the mortar joints to reveal some of the larger aggregate and simulate some early weathering.