

Privat: building a terrace with wood: manual step by step

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Building a terrace isn't a big deal for people with some basic technical skills. It is not enough, though, to just select the planks. In the articles published on my blog, I am going to tell you what you have to consider when building a wooden terrace.

With the right manual and the right products, everyone can build a beautiful terrace in his garden. I made a check list with seven important points. If you follow these rules, your terrace project is definitely going to be a success.

1) Measure the area: First of all, you have to decide how big your terrace shall be. Measure the length and the width and mark the selected area properly.

2) Bulldoze the surface: Obviously, the ground has to be flat so that your terrace has a stable stand. No matter what kind of surface you have, you have to dig the surface and put some sand, grit or crushed rocks on it. The reason is that it is easier for the water to sink in the soil.

3) A solid surface is needed: Building a terrace directly on grit, for example, is not ideal. The reason is that grit is kind of slippery, so the terrace is more likely to move on grit than on a solid surface. Therefore, you should either pour concrete on the surface or put some rock plates on it to make the surface solidier.

4) Use adjustable pedestals: No matter how hard you try to bulldoze your surface: It is almost impossible to make it 100 per cent flat. To avoid that your substructure gets aslope and to lift it a bit from the wet ground, you should use adjustable pedestals. They even out differences in height up to 30 centimetres (11,8 inches). I recommend to place an adjustable pedestal every 60 cm (23,6"). You can also choose a larger distance between the pedestals, but to make your terrace stable, you should at least place a pedestal every 100 cm (39,4"). Otherwise, the planks are going to sag. I know pedestals are quite expensive, but if you don't spend some money on them, you'll regret it.

5) Base pads are a good alternative: If the differences in height of your surface aren't that big, let's say just a few millimeters (<0,4"), you can save some money by buying base pads instead of adjustable pedestals. I recommend to take base pads made of natural rubber. If you compare them to base pads of granulate material, they have the advantage that they don't store water in their gaps. If your terrace's substructure is made of wood, it would constantly draw water from the ground, stay wet and therefore rot earlier.

6) Build a substructure: You need a place where you can fix the planks that your wife has decided to take;) That's why every terrace needs a substructure. That substructure can be made of wood, steel or aluminium. It should be aligned parallelly with a distance between 40 and 65 cm (15,7" to 25,6").

7) Keep the right distance: When you have finished your substructure, the last thing you have to do is fixing the planks. But be careful: Never attach them directly to the substructure! If you do that, water is stored in the space between the planks and the substructure. That's bad for the wood, because if it stays wet permanently, it is going to rot very fast. To avoid that, put spacers made of rubber in between. A spacer is only necessary if you use stainless steel screws to fix the planks. If you choose a professional decking fastening system that is not visible to the eye instead, you usually don't need a spacer as there is already a built-in distance.

Furthermore, it is important to have the right gap between the planks. When planks get wet because of rain or molten snow, they tend to extend a few millimetres in width. If the gap is too small, the planks are going to bump into each other. As a result, the planks bend up. To avoid that, choose a gap between 5 and 8 mm.

Now you know everything that is important if you decide to build a terrace. Of course, I could only explain you the different steps superficially. In my next articles, I am going to go more into detail. Furthermore, you are going to find some basic recommendations and pro- and contra-lists about certain products and materials on my blog.

Yours, Uwe