

CONCRETE FURNITURE

BEAUTY, VALUE & FUNCTION



The principal attribute of concrete furniture is design flexibility. Many architects and interior designers call concrete a fluid material because of the unlimited design possibilities. Concrete furniture is warm and earthy while exhibiting durability and low maintenance.”

— Mark Lesnick, Mark Concrete



CONCRETE FURNITURE

BASIC RULES FOR FURNISHING YOUR HOME

Make It You, Make It Unique

1

CONCRETE FURNITURE

Couched in Huge Benefits

2

If It's Color You Want, Concrete's the Answer

3

CONCRETE FURNITURE INDOORS

Stylish and Functional

4

BRING CONCRETE FURNITURE OUTDOORS

Complement Surroundings

5

OFFICE FURNITURE

Concrete Means Business

6

CONCRETE GOES COMMERCIAL, RETAIL

8

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

10

EIGHT TIPS FOR HIRING A CONCRETE CONTRACTOR

12

ABOUT THE CONCRETE NETWORK

13

Read More Online about [Concrete Furniture](http://www.ConcreteNetwork.com) at www.ConcreteNetwork.com



Photo Courtesy of Mark Concrete

Find a Contractor in Your Local Area — www.ConcreteNetwork.com

BASIC RULES FOR FURNISHING YOUR HOME:

Make it You, Make it Unique

Ideas for furnishing and decorating the home are available like never before. We're surrounded by an increasing number of home design publications, TV shows, and retail and warehouse stores that inspire us in transforming our homes into an extensions of ourselves.

While there isn't a long list of hard and fast rules when it comes to how you furnish and decorate your home, there are two key caveats — make it unique and make it an extension of yourself and your family.

Industry watchers say many Americans are leaning toward more modern looks in their homes.



“After years of country chic and comfy clutter filling the pages of consumer magazines, people are looking for a sleeker, more modern look in their homes. The newest designs are clean and simple with sharper lines and geometric shapes. We’re replacing those supersized recliners of 2000 with pieces of furniture that are more elegant and streamlined.”

— Joan McCloskey, editorial marketing director for *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine.

And great furniture isn't confined to just the inside of the house. Gone are the days of flimsy plastic fold-up chairs scattered about the patio.

“The biggest trend we see in landscape remodeling right now are second houses — or almost — being built in back yards,” McCloskey said. “You think I’m exaggerating, I’ll bet! But think about this: We’ve got outdoor kitchens, family rooms with firepits, dining alcoves in gazebos, and sleeping porches. In other words, we’ve nearly built another whole house. That is, everything except the outhouse is now in duplicate in our yards.”

CONCRETE FURNITURE: *Couched in Huge Benefits*

If you're like most other Americans, when it comes to furnishing your home, you're looking for pieces that are stylish, versatile, and reflection of you. While concrete is earning respect as a great choice for countertops, many don't realize that concrete can be used in myriad other ways to furnish and bring a sense of style to your home — inside and out.

Concrete is versatile and can be molded to have soft, graceful curves and warm, soothing color tones. For a look that's bold and contemporary, fabricators can cast concrete into interesting geometric shapes and colors in an array of bright, vivid hues.

“Concrete has textural, natural appeal with unique character exposed with each pour. Its strong, structural presence in furniture design is highlighted when juxtaposed with materials such as glass.”

— *David Clear, DK Clear Design*

Because concrete can be poured to shape any form, it can also be cast to accommodate any type of existing space restrictions.



Concrete offers a unique look and its creative possibilities are endless. Each concrete artisan approaches his or her craft personally, achieving a distinct look by building his or her own forms, developing special casting techniques, and using proprietary materials and coloring methods.

“The versatility of the medium allows for modular or monolithic forms in an infinite array of colors and textures. Crafted with finesse or left in its natural organic state, concrete can be used indoors or out.”

— *Michael Bustin, meld USA*



Photo Courtesy of Buddy Rhodes

IF IT'S COLOR YOU WANT, *Concrete is the Answer*

One of the benefits of choosing concrete is the range of colors available. Each concrete contractor offers his or her own unique standard and premium colors. And many will create custom colors to help you match or complement other furniture.

Wanda Ellerbeck of Grotto Designs in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, says that back when she was starting out, the only colors available in Calgary were red, yellow, and black.

Today, Grotto Designs offers custom colors and stains, and integral pigments and applied stains can be used together for exotic and extraordinary effects.

“It’s very difficult to get purple in stone, but in concrete, yes ... it is very important for architects because they can express their dream.”



Photo Courtesy of Flying Turtle

— *Muriel Hautoux, Art and Maison*

Samples will always be different because each contractor has their own secret recipe and uses different types and amounts of cement and aggregates. In fact, cement will vary in different parts of the country. There are different brands of pigments, stains, and aggregate colors, so concrete furniture will always be one-of-a-kind.

At Meld USA in Raleigh, North Carolina, there are over 60 standard colors with more than 300 colors in the color library expanding.

Their in-house designed computer program develops batches, prints out the “recipe,” catalogs colors, and provides the water-to-cement ratio.

Flying Turtle Cast Concrete offers a huge range of colors that can be as brilliant as you want to go. In addition to their standard colors, they can create custom colors to your specifications for a minimal fee. All their colors are achieved with pigments that are added to the mix.



Photo Courtesy of Dex

CONCRETE FURNITURE INDOORS:

Stylish and Functional

One of the greatest attributes of concrete is its ability to blend with or complement any style you're aiming to evoke. Its texture can range from smooth and polished — perfect for a refined look to natural and coarse — charming in a rustic or Old World setting.

“But while concrete can be used to create a modern or minimal look, it’s also perfectly adaptable to a more traditional setting—where it was so extensively used in the first place. In truth, there are no standard guidelines that, if followed, will guarantee you’ll get a certain look. All “styles” are really just an amalgamation of details that evoke a certain feeling when used together.”

— *Fu-Tung Cheng, Cheng Design*

Many architectural concrete contractors create a range of furniture, including conference tables, bedside tables, cocktail tables, accent tables, benches, beds, urban seating, kinetic tables and work stations.



Photos Courtesy of Meld

Because of concrete’s ability to mold into any shape, it can be created into virtually anything you have in mind.



Photos Courtesy of Cheng

“Extremeconcrete furnishings can complement any interior or architectural design platform from transitional, French country and eclectic to contemporary/modern, urban chic and extreme avant-garde.”

— *Michael Bustin, meldUSA*

BRING CONCRETE FURNITURE OUTDOORS TO COMPLEMENT SURROUNDINGS

One thing that many Americans everywhere — from California to New England, from Texas to Minnesota — have in common is our desire to spend more time at home and more time outdoors.

Back yards are being transformed into luxurious extensions of the house. They're the new favorite room to relax, entertain, and cook.

The outdoor living craze is the result of North America's interest in 'cocooning,' the trend toward a more casual lifestyle, an aging population and the popularity of porches, decks, and patios, according to the Hearth, Patio, and Barbecue Association.



The Pool and Spa Institute says an increasing number of homeowners are going all out with outdoor kitchens, furnished seating areas, fireplaces, pizza ovens, elaborate water features, and more.

While many Americans choose concrete for their patios, many are extending concrete to pizza ovens, bartops, and outdoor seating, including benches and tables.

“Concrete is one of the oldest, strongest and most durable materials that humans have ever made. Because it is mixed and poured, its variations and design potentials are almost infinite ... Applications are limited only by the imagination.”

— Wanda Ellerbeck of Grotto Designs, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.



OFFICE FURNITURE: *Concrete Means Business*

When it comes to office furniture, employers and employees favor desks and tables that are functional and stylish.

Custom-crafted, one-of-a-kind concrete furniture inspires conversation. It creates a favorable, lasting impression with both clients and employees — an impression that will echo positive feelings.

Concrete furniture can be used in the lobby to make an impression, to highlight your company's brand of individuality. Concrete can be molded into any shaped conference table you'd like. The possibilities are endless — as are the possible colors and textures.

“People are after a different look. Something that has more character and craftsmanship, and is more of a natural component.”

— Gary Simpson, *Kaldari*

There's a growing trend toward building with natural materials such as stone, rock, and concrete. That trend is being taken into the workplace. With modern methods of staining, coloring, and treating, any look can be achieved.



Photo Courtesy of Dex



The end results also yield a piece of furniture that is durable. DEX Studios uses a high performance, high strength proprietary mix design for fabrication of all products that yields a product with high compressive strength, high abrasion resistance and low porosity.



Rod Woods of Patina Studios has created some unique ones. The countertop he produced for an architecture office conference room sports a rock streambed embedded in the countertop. The client had a general idea about wanting an aquarium or waterfall. So, trying to incorporate that idea into the countertop, water flows underneath an aquarium, falls off the edge of the countertop and into a lower countertop pool.

“It’s just basically the natural look and feel that is so appealing to many. And the design aspect is limitless. You can manipulate it to do whatever you want — you can do things you just can’t do with other materials.”

— *Shawn Van Driessche, Two Stones Design*



Photo Courtesy of 2Stones



Photo Courtesy of Buddy Rhodes

The possibilities for creative expression with concrete are endless. Each concrete artisan approaches the craft differently, achieving a distinct “signature look” by building their own forms, developing special casting techniques, and using proprietary materials and coloring methods.

Because each piece is made to order, the customer can also provide creative input. Some designers and architects choose concrete because it’s something different.

“The design community is very excited — and that’s the most important measure. When the architects and designers favor a material, they’ll continue with it.”

— *Mat Rogers, Flying Turtle Cast Concrete*

CONCRETE GOES COMMERCIAL, RETAIL

Some of the most likely places you'll find concrete furniture are the restaurants, salons, and retail stores you frequent. Commercial and retail outlets strive to create signature looks, unique to their business — an impressive look that will stay fresh in the minds of patrons.

One of the country's top decorative concrete companies, Buddy Rhodes Studio in San Francisco, has a client list boasting an impressive lineup, including more than 60 Pottery Barn stores throughout the United States and Canada, where BRS created display shelves, cash wraps, purse ledges at the cash register area, exterior storefronts, bathroom vanities, and fireplace surrounds with corbels.

They've also provided their handiwork to more than 30 Illuminations sites, providing the stunning exterior storefront wainscot, cornice, niche ledges, and key stones.

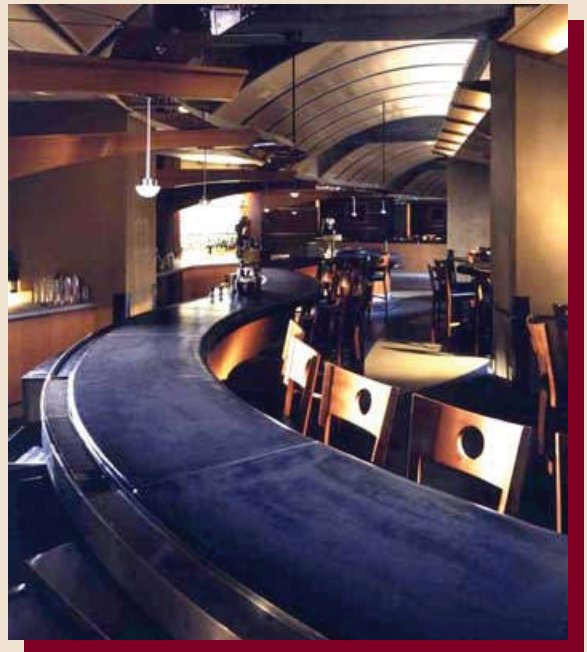
Some of the studio's other clients include a retail store at the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas, Jamba Juice, Levi's, NBA Store in New York, Bath and Beyond, Bank of America, Apple Computers, Inc., and a host of other recognizable names, including a slew of upscale restaurants.

And Flying Turtle Cast Concrete of Modesto, Calif., has done its fair share of commercial projects for clients, including Merrill Lynch, Charles Schwab, and Bank of America.

Wanda Ellerbeck of Grotto Designs in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, says she's seen a remarkable evolution in the industry over the past decade.



Photo Courtesy of Buddy Rhodes



Some of the most influential changes she's seen involve the amazing technical advances that give concrete its great versatility.

“Like the introduction of polymers and additives and the scope of colors now available.”

– *Wanda Ellerbeck*

When it comes to textures, Grotto Designs can make a surface as smooth as glass. Ellerbeck can ground an edge to expose the aggregate, producing a dramatic effect.



Photo Courtesy of Buddy Rhodes



Photo Courtesy of Flying Turtle

And for a more rustic feel, chipped edges can be integrated into the countertop.

At DK Clear Design, they use both concrete and steel to create, because working together, concrete and steel allow more beautiful materials to present themselves.

Meld USA's Extremeconcrete™ was recently added to Material Connexion's innovative materials library in both NYC and Milan, Italy. Material ConneXion is the largest global resource of new materials.

Bank of America,
Downtown San Francisco,
Corporate Offices

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FROM BUDDY RHODES STUDIO:

Does the concrete ever crack?

Yes, hairline cracking may occur. These are not structural and are part of the character of concrete.

Does the concrete stain or is it waterproof?

The concrete is sealed making it water and stain resistant (spec sheets can be sent on request).

What if I want a color that is not in the sample package?

We can make custom colors attempting to match almost any color, there is a \$75.00 charge that is applied to your order.

Does the color ever vary?

Yes, every order is custom which lends to the products uniqueness.

What is the maximum size slab we can make?

Approximately 7' x 3', otherwise it has a tendency to crack or become too heavy to work with, seaming may be required.



Photo Courtesy of Arts Maison

FROM COUNTERCAST DESIGNS:

What about seams?

Seams are approximately 0.25" and filled with matching epoxy grout. Although visible, they do not detract from the aesthetic quality at all.

Will they crack?

No. With our proprietary mix, steel and glass-fibre reinforcement coupled with special curing techniques and additives, we guarantee our products against structural cracking under normal conditions. Hairline cracks (literally a hair's width and invisible from 3 feet away) are inherent in concrete and may occur. They are superficial and often make the concrete look even more like stone.



Photo Courtesy of DK Clear Design

Do you build them in my house?

Absolutely not. All our work is PRECAST in our workshop with very few exceptions. Working off-site allows us to create our custom sinks, special integral features, edges and finishes; control important elements such as temperature, humidity and water which affect curing and strength; and to utilize any special equipment, machinery and materials without worrying about a customer's cabinets or interior. Our techniques, without exception, produce the highest quality and strongest concrete available today.

Care:

Clean-up spills using a mild cleaner such as Simple Green, wiping daily. Wax weekly during the first month and then semi-annually. Avoid repeated or prolonged placement of objects over 300 degrees F. Buffing the surface regularly with a soft cloth will enhance the shine and increase the durability of the sealer. The use of bleach, harsh abrasives or caustic cleaners may be detrimental to the concrete. In drastic circumstances, concrete can always be re-colored, re-sealed, refinished or repaired.

FROM GROTTO DESIGNS:

Is it heavy?

Our standard mix using lightweight aggregates weighs approximately 12lb. - 13lb./sq. ft. for 1.5" thickness. This is well within load capacities for standard North American residential construction and modular kitchen cabinets. In general, no extra support or stiffening is required. Using fiber and polymer additives concrete slabs may be cast much lighter with greater span capabilities.

How thick is it?

1.5" thick is standard and as thin as 0.75" for slabs. Drop edges of up to 12" may be incorporated for a heavier look. Tiles and panels may be as thin as 0.5"

Does it look like a sidewalk?

Absolutely not! In general, our surfaces are as smooth as glass. If anything, it looks like stone with the added characteristic that it may be colored to create depth and richness. We like to say it looks like concrete!

Will it crack?

If it hasn't cracked by the time it leaves our shop then it's not going to. Concrete continues to harden for up to 50 years. Due to casting and reinforcement techniques used and proper curing, structural cracks are extremely rare. Superficial hairline surface cracks may, in time, occur but do not affect the strength or functionality of the concrete in any way and may even add to the organic appeal of the material.

How long does it last?

Potentially, forever. Under normal use your concrete countertop, sink or vanity will outlast the house that it is in. The only thing that can deteriorate concrete is prolonged exposure to salt water or freeze/thaw cycles.

What about sealers?

We use the best industrial sealers on the market today. The vast majority of our products are sealed with semi gloss, food safe, low VOC, water-borne urethane epoxies. They are very tough, compatible with concrete and highly resistant to scratching or staining. Under normal use this sealer may last up to ten years.



Are there seams?

Yes, there are seams. They are less than 1/8" wide and filled with matching grout. Seams do not detract from the overall appearance of the concrete, on the contrary, they add character and dimension.

How long does it take?

Concrete must cure at least 14 days before it is safe to transport. We prefer to double that. So, expect 4 - 6 weeks from the time we receive templates.

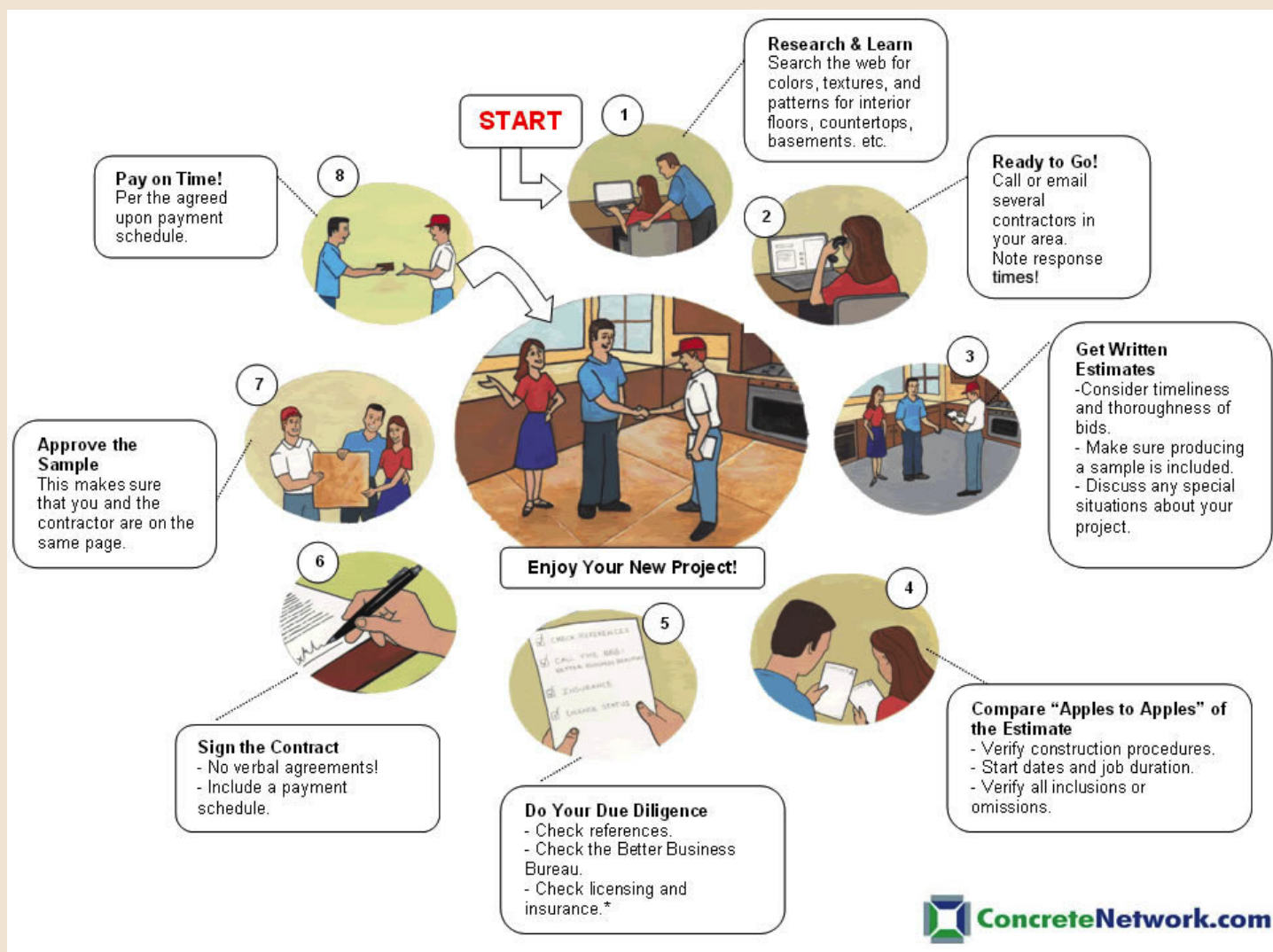
Is it cheaper than granite?

It can be, and most of our standard items are. However, making concrete is labor intensive. Each piece is individually made and requires many steps to a final product. Custom pieces and complex shapes may cost more than granite.



Photo Courtesy of Formworks

EIGHT TIPS FOR HIRING A CONCRETE CONTRACTOR



Use this guide to make sure you're prepared when it comes to hiring a contractor. These 8 simple steps are your key to knowing what information you should look for, what questions you should ask, and to understanding some vital do's and don'ts during the process. Your preparedness can make a difference in how smoothly your project gets installed. Print a copy of this diagram and refer to it through each step of your project. Before you know it, you'll be enjoying your new concrete too!

ABOUT THE CONCRETE NETWORK

The Concrete Network (www.concretenetwork.com), located in Yucaipa, Calif., is the largest and most comprehensive resource online for concrete information. Over 1 million people visit the site each month to read articles, get design ideas, and to search its extensive directory for a concrete contractor in their area.

Established in 1999, The Concrete Network's purpose is to educate homeowners, contractors, builders, and designers on popular decorative techniques and applications. With thousands of articles, photographs, and a comprehensive directory of concrete contractors, The Concrete Network is a repository of information about the industry's products and services, including stamped concrete, stained concrete floors, concrete countertops, polished concrete, and much more.

The site excels at connecting buyers with local contractors in their area through its Find-A-Contractor service. The service provides visitors with a list of decorative concrete contractors throughout the U.S. and Canada, and is fully searchable by 23 types of decorative concrete work and 200 regional areas throughout North America. The directory is organized by area and specialty, such as patios, pool decks, driveways, countertops, floors, stamped concrete, and water features, among many others.

Site visitors can choose their local area and view concrete contractors and concrete products, obtain full contact information for the listed businesses, and contact them directly.

The Concrete Network was founded by Jim Peterson, a former Vice President of a major concrete company in Riverside, Calif. During the 1999 World of Concrete Trade Show in Las Vegas, Peterson had the idea to create an industry portal on the World Wide Web for all things related to concrete.



www.concretenetwork.com

