

Basic Slating Guide

For full details on the complete process of slating, refer to **BS 5534: 2003 Codes of Practice for Slating and Tiling**, which is a very comprehensive document. Below are a few of the basic pointers to ensure you get the roof that you wanted and anticipated.

Check the Pitch and Size of Slate

Check the roof pitch and make sure that you use the correct size of slate, laid at the necessary headlap. If in doubt refer to the Annual Driving Rain Index and the Coverages and Headlaps charts on our website. Check that the holing on the slates will allow you to lay them at the required headlap.

All Slates should be Graded or Sorted

If the slates have been graded and the roof has been battened out correctly to the required headlap, then laying the slate is relatively straight forward. There is a recent trend to load crates directly on to the scaffold and lay the slates straight out of the pallet without grading. It is extremely unlikely to achieve a satisfactory finish this way.

The proper grading and selection of slates is extremely important to achieving a neat and attractive finished roof. All slates, regardless of whether they are Prime (First) Selection or Premium (Standard) Selection, must be sorted. Don't be taken in by claims of slates being pregraded!! Prime selection slates are more consistent but will still have to be put into a minimum of 3 separate thicknesses, lesser grades may require more thicknesses. Any twisted or broken slates should be set aside for cutting down for undereaves, toppers and other cuts, this will help minimising the amount of wastage on the project.

The thicker graded slates should be laid at bottom of the roof and the thinner at the top.



Slate Nails

Slate Nails, also known as Clout Nails should always be made from either Copper, Aluminium Alloy or Silicon Bronze. In Marine or corrosive environments, Copper is the preferable choice. With Silicon Bronze being used in extremely severe exposure situations. Using Galvanised nails is not acceptable and may result in supplier guarantees being invalidated. Further advice is available, if required.

Undereaves Course

The undereaves slate is usually laid "bed up", ie upside down. This is not critical but it does give a neater appearance. The undereaves slate should always be cut to the correct length. As an example, a 500x250mm slate laid to a 90mm headlap should be cut to 290mm long, this is the gauge plus the headlap. A common bad practice is to take a full slate and to turn it around 90 degrees then lay it along its length, so that the undereave will then be 250mm rather than 290mm. This will cause problems later during the life of the roof.

Laying Slates

When laying the slates, if they do not lay flat, sometimes it may help to crop off one or both corners where they sit on the batten. This is called “shouldering” and has always been a common practice over centuries of slating roofs. Many reclaimed slates are all shouldered. If that does not remedy the situation, do not lay it - slates do not flatten out over time!! Either use that slate as a cut elsewhere on the roof, or don’t fix it at all. Wastage on site will always happen in slating. A general rule to work to is about 4



to 5% on Prime selection slates and sometimes up to double that on Premium selection slates.

Broken Slates

Slated roofs should not be walked on, they are not designed for this. Fixed slates may also get broken by other trades on the roof. Any broken slates should be replaced immediately using a mechanical fixing, not stuck down with adhesive or silicone as they will very likely fall out over time. One of the most popular types of fixing is Hallhook Repair Hooks.

Cutting Slates, Valleys and Hips

At verges and abutments alternate courses should be started with either half width slates or slate and a halves in order to maintain the broken bond laying. If the half width slate is less than 150mm then slate and halves must be used.



At valleys, hips and other places where slate need to be cut on a rake, it is essential that slates are wide enough to accommodate a proper fixing. The narrowest part at the head or tail should be no less than 50mm, if this the case than a slate and half must be used.

These are only some of the very basics of slating and, as noted before, full details are available in BS5534: 2003