

They each have advantages and disadvantages.

When the time comes to install a new driveway, your biggest decision is usually whether to use concrete or asphalt. There are other driveway material choices, too—brick pavers at the high end—but concrete and asphalt are the most common.

Depending on the climate where you live, concrete or asphalt driveways are both good options. Let's take a hard look at the pros and cons of each:

1 Concrete Pros and Cons

Concrete is one of the most commonly used hard surface materials for driveways. Concrete is made by mixing cement with sand and gravel.



Pros of concrete

- Lasts a long time, 30+ years.
- Low maintenance; concrete requires only periodic sealing.
- Does not soften.
- Can be colored and scored.
- More readily available than asphalt.

Cons of concrete

- Concrete will crack.
- Salt will damage.
- Due to its lighter color, stains are more noticeable.

2 Asphalt Pros and Cons

Asphalt is the other common material used for driveways and roads. It is often referred to as blacktop because of its color. Asphalt is made from a combination of stone and sand fused together with material left over from the production of gasoline, diesel and kerosene.



Pros of asphalt

- Because of its dark color, it doesn't show stains easily.
- Repair is easy because it can be re-layered.

Cons of asphalt

- Somewhat shorter lifespan than concrete.
- Maintenance is required every few years (resealing).
- Has an oily texture that softens in heat and sunlight.
- Has a rough edge.



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3 Climate

For those who live in areas that have either very cold winters or very warm summers, climate can be an important consideration. Salt used for melting ice can create pits (spalls) in concrete, leaving blotches across the driveway, if drive not sealed properly.

Alternatively, asphalt has issues in hotter climates. The tar in asphalt can become soft in the high heat of summer and become tacky, even deform, in some cases. It is important to talk to your contractor or home builder about the effects the local climate will have on both asphalt and concrete prior to finalizing any decisions.

4 Maintenance

There are definite differences when considering maintenance. Six months to a year after installation, asphalt driveways should be sealed, and then re-sealed every three to five years thereafter. This can be done by anyone and does not require special tools or machinery. Sealing the asphalt will extend the life of the driveway, which when properly maintained can last upwards of 30 years.

Concrete driveways do not necessarily need to be sealed to last upwards of 50 years. However, sealing a concrete driveway can help preserve the look and finish. Concrete driveways will stain easier than asphalt (although sealing will help) and will require a degreaser to remove any oil-based stains that may occur.

Cracks in both asphalt and concrete can be repaired. However, asphalt cracks are easier to repair and blend into the original. Concrete repairs are more obvious due to weathering and color differences in different batches of concrete.

5 Cost

Costs are very similar for residential application. Because there are more suppliers and tradesmen who can install concrete driveways, they tend to be more readily available. Generally speaking, the longer the drive, the more likely asphalt will provide the better value.

	ASPHALT	CONCRETE
Curing	Can drive on asphalt almost immediately.	Wait for proper curing before driving on it.
Upkeep	More maintenance.	Less maintenance, requires only periodic sealing.
Cracking	Easier to repair. Cracks and holes can be filled and sealed.	Patching is more obvious.
Weather	Shrinks and expands with temperature changes.	Prone to cracks under pressure of frost heaving.
Oil & gas	Oil leaks not as noticeable, but gasoline will cause damage.	Gas and oil spills leave more obvious stains than on asphalt.
Longevity	Up to 20+ years.	Up to 30+ years.