



RECON TEXTURE & STAINING GUIDE



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The Recon Difference

At Recon, we are committed to providing more than just superior products—we offer Durable Systems with Enduring Partnerships.

Our retaining wall systems are engineered for long-lasting durability, designed to meet the toughest demands and withstand the test of time. But just as important as the strength of our products is the strength of the relationships we build with our partners. Whether you're a contractor, engineer, architect, or developer, we believe in fostering partnerships based on trust, reliability, and mutual success. These enduring relationships allow us to work closely with our clients, providing customized support and solutions that go beyond just delivering blocks.

But durability doesn't end with structural integrity. Aesthetic appeal is also a key part of what makes our systems stand out. Retaining walls are more than functional elements—they're often integral to the overall design and visual impact of a project. This is why we offer a variety of aesthetic options to meet your project's unique needs.

In this Staining and Texture Guide, we highlight the array of design possibilities available to our Recon partners. From textures that evoke natural stone and earthy surfaces to custom staining options that add color and character, we ensure you have the tools to create visually stunning and structurally sound retaining walls.

By choosing Recon, you're not just getting a product; you're gaining a partner who's committed to your project's success from start to finish. Together, we'll create walls that stand strong for decades, backed by a partnership you can always count on.



Recon Textures

The Recon Wall System provides a selection of five different textures; Northshore Granite, LeSueur County Limestone, Old World, Rustic, or Weathered Edge.



**Northshore
Granite**

Northshore Granite is Recon's first and most popular texture. It has the classic appeal of rock that withstands the elements, retaining a subtly-textured, lightly weathered look.

Specifications:

- Northshore Granite looks great unstained in its natural grey concrete finish, but at times the addition of color is requested by the customer.
- It provides the full 48" x 16" face size in a natural weathered granite finish.



**LeSueur County
Limestone**

LeSueur County Limestone takes its name from the natural limestone found in the central portion of the State of Minnesota. It comes in four different individual face variations, which, if inverted in the form during the production process can create 8 different individual block textures.

Specifications:

- It provides the full 48" x 16" face size.
- Again, this texture looks great unstained but is frequently stained to a natural buff / tan color.



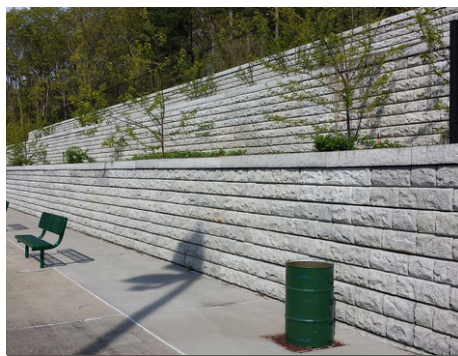
Old World

Old World offers a distinct break from Recon's traditional natural stone textures, featuring a smooth face with chamfered edges. This design is ideal for replicating industrial-style concrete blocks or complementing modern projects where clean, straight lines are preferred.

Specifications:

- This block is the full 48" x 16" face size.
- The Old World is at times "sandblasted" to distress the face, and at other times it is stained.

Recon Textures

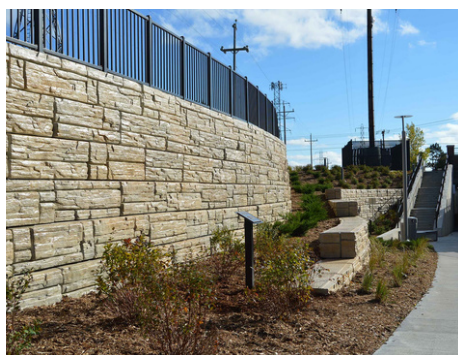


Rustic

Rustic provides an option for customers that are seeking the appearance of a smaller block combined with the mass and convenience of our full-size block. Three different individual face variations, which if inverted in the form creates 6 different individual block textures.

Specifications:

- Although it looks like smaller blocks stacked on one another, it is the full 48" x 16" block size.
- Rustic offers 8" coursing with individual block faces running from 8" to 30" in width at the face.



Weathered Edge

Recon's Weathered Edge texture features five stacked stone patterns that seamlessly blend for a natural, authentic look. The randomness of the design adds depth and texture both within and between the stones.

Specifications:

- Weathered Edge has block heights ranging from 3" to 16" and widths between 9" and 48".
- The overall size of the Recon block (48" x 16" face dimension of an individual physical block unit) is preserved even though it looks like smaller units stacked.

Be sure to visit the Recon website under *Block Information > Block Textures* to explore photos of each texture - each one has its own PDF for easy viewing. Keep in mind, though, that not all textures are available everywhere, so it's a good idea to check with your local Recon Block producer to see what they offer in your area. For guidance on specifying the desired texture for your project, please consult the Recon CSI Master Format Specification, Section 2.2, A., 7.

Staining & Sealing

Overview

Most manufacturers of the Recon block produce it in a natural, unstained concrete grey. If a customer desires a stained finish, this is typically achieved by applying concrete stain after the wall is constructed. However, a few select Recon producers offer a "dust-in stain" option, where the block arrives with color already on its face (check with your local producer, as this is the exception rather than the rule). Staining is purely an aesthetic choice and is not necessary for durability.

Recon blocks are made from wet cast, air-entrained concrete with a minimum compressive strength of 4000 psi (27.6 MPa). This makes the product highly durable and resistant to freeze-thaw cycles, road salts, and brackish water. While not required, sealers can be applied for added protection against these elements.

STAINING

There are several options for staining concrete surfaces, including water-based stains, acid etch stains, and hybrid products that blend characteristics of both. Each type offers different application processes, colors, and effects, allowing for a wide range of aesthetic possibilities.

Water-based stains are popular for their ease of application and environmentally friendly nature. They are available in a broad spectrum of colors, from light tans and earthy browns to various shades of gray, charcoal, and even black. These stains can be layered with additional highlights after the base coat to create depth and variation, giving the wall a customized appearance.

Acid etch stains, however, require a more meticulous application process and a higher level of expertise. These stains react with the concrete to produce deep, vibrant colors—most commonly dark browns and rust tones—along with natural variations that enhance the wall's appearance with an authentic, organic feel. The unique mottling effect achieved with acid etch stains adds character, making them a popular choice for projects seeking a more artistic or weathered look.

Recon's specifications focus exclusively on water-based products, ensuring ease of use and consistency in results. For customers interested in exploring acid etch or hybrid stains for a more distinct finish, this guide will provide an overview but Recon encourages contacting them directly for further guidance and information.

Staining & Sealing

STAINING

1. Before applying stain, it is crucial to power wash the wall and allow it to dry completely. This removes dirt, debris, and any form oil from the surface of the block, ensuring proper stain adhesion.
2. Recommended stains include Sherwin Williams H & C Shield Plus Concrete Stain and TK Products Stain #5272. Both are latex / water-based stains that can be applied using either an electric airless sprayer or a compressed air sprayer. Sherwin Williams products are widely available at retail outlets nationwide, while TK Products can be sourced by contacting their headquarters at 11400 West 47th Street, Minnetonka, MN 55343 (1-800-441-2129) to locate a distributor near you.
3. Color selection is a critical factor in achieving the desired aesthetic. Although customers may ask for a color chart, such a chart does not exist. Most customers prefer a multi-color stain that replicates the appearance of natural stone already present at the site or incorporated into nearby buildings. For this reason, it's recommended that customers provide the staining contractor with a sample of the natural stone they want to match. The contractor can then use this sample to help the stain distributor mix both the base coat and any highlights. Some staining contractors may also have sample options available for customers to choose from.
4. The wall can be stained in a single color with one coat, or a more natural, weathered look can be achieved by applying a base color followed by several different highlight shades. Typically, highlights are applied randomly to several blocks, and before they dry, they are wiped off with a wet sponge to blend the highlights into the surface and create a more natural effect.
5. For specification purposes, it's important to disclose how many highlights are desired, as each additional highlight adds to the overall cost of the staining process. For example, a specification might state "a base coat and two highlights."
6. The stain should be applied according to the manufacturer's guidelines. This usually includes steps like preparing the concrete surface (power washing and drying), ensuring the concrete has cured to a minimum of 28 days, and applying the stain within a specified temperature range. Following these recommendations will ensure the best possible outcome for the stained wall.

Staining & Sealing

SEALING

1. Some customers request that their walls be sealed, which can be especially important if the wall is in an area exposed to road splash, where winter road salts might come into contact with its surface.
2. If you're using TK Products stain, they also offer several compatible sealers, such as TK-290-12, a solvent-based 12% siloxane sealer. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for surface preparation and application. It's critical that the blocks are completely dry before applying the sealer—not just dry to the touch. Since water and the mineral-based sealer do not mix, adequate drying time is essential after power washing. You'll need warm, dry weather and enough time for the blocks to fully dry before the sealer can be applied. Note that the sealer must be applied before the stain.

WATER BORN STAINS



Water Born Concrete Stains offer a wide range of color choices. Each of these Recon Block samples shown represents a base coat and one or two highlights.



The water-based staining process typically starts with a power wash to clean the surface, followed by the application of a base coat. Afterward, one or two highlights are added for depth and variation. To achieve a natural, blended look, a wet sponge is used to wipe the highlights off the blocks before they dry.



The finished product with a water-based stain can be impressive, offering a rich, natural look. The combination of base coats and highlights creates depth, enhancing the overall aesthetic of the wall.

Staining & Sealing

WATER BORN STAINS EXAMPLES



Before



After



After

WATER BORN STAINS EXAMPLES



Before



After



After



After

ACID ETCH STAINS

While Recon does not recommend a specific staining product for acid stains, these stains offer an alternative option worth considering. Typically, they produce darker shades, such as deep browns and rust tones. The depth of color can vary based on the dilution ratio of the acid stain to water and the volume of stain applied. Several photos of these stains are provided for reference. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's recommendations for proper application.

Staining & Sealing



This sample shows an acid etch stain, with varying stain to water dilution ratios.



Color options for staining are often displayed on-site. Several blocks at the bottom of the wall are stained in a variety of colors for the customer and architect to review and choose from. In this photo, the staining contractor has arranged a selection of natural stones chosen by the customer and created multiple color combinations for them to consider.



Acid etch stains can produce a deep and vibrant color palette, with natural variations arising from slight differences in the thickness of the applied stain.



Finally, applying a sealer over an acid etch stain can enhance the colors and add a subtle sheen to the wall. This display wall features one section that has been sealed alongside another section that is stained but not sealed, illustrating the difference in appearance.

Myths & Facts

MYTH #1: STAINING IS EXPENSIVE

Fact: A 5-gallon pail covers about 1,500 square feet of concrete and costs approximately \$120 dollars.

MYTH #2: STAINING TAKES A LONG TIME

Fact: With a water-based stain, you can apply the base coat in the morning and apply the accents in the afternoon, weather pending.

MYTH #3: YOU HAVE TO BE AN ARTIST TO APPLY A STAIN

Fact: Staining is somewhat forgiving. If you've made a mistake and notice it before the stain dries, you can use a spray bottle to apply water and gently buff it off. If you notice this after it dries, you can layer on more to conceal the abnormality.

TIPS

Practice!

Let the owner see what it looks like; if your project involves a demo wall, stain part of it with some sample stains so they can see what it will look like in real conditions.

If you need a trusted staining partner, contact us for a referral. We can connect you with a staining expert.

Recon Wall System

If you would like more information about Recon Wall Systems or have questions and need consulting about your retaining wall project – please don't hesitate to reach out to our sales team and we will help you with whatever you need!

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