

Choose the right plywood for form work

The table below was updated from an article that originally appeared in Concrete International, authored by John V. Gould of Simpson Timber Company. The accompanying article presents some good general principles for form selection based on the demands for the job...

Architectural Concrete

For 'as cast' architectural concrete

Use a 2-step MDO if the reuse factor is high enough. MDO 2-step will normally have a smooth sanded surface and will give the concrete a matte finish for good smooth-

ness and paintability. HDO is recommended for a smoother surface and higher reuse, but only where the surface will **not** be painted.

For mechanically textured architectural concrete

Select the panel type with the appropriate reuse factor. Sanded BB may leave deep patch discolorations that can be difficult to remove with mechanical texturing.

For coated architectural concrete

Use MDO for thin paint coats. Select a release agent that will not affect paintabil-

ity. HDO will give more reuse, but may require an abrasion treatment to get the coating to stick well. BB Plyform use may result in sugaring stains that are difficult to cover.

For non-architectural concrete

For below grade or rough areas that will be covered, select panels for the appropriate reuse durability. BB is often used here, but may not be the lowest cost option. For above grade exposed areas, HDO and MDO are good for reuseability and appearance, and BB is okay if reuse and appearance is not important.

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Characteristic/Form Type → ↓	Sanded BB Plyform	High Density Overlay	MDO 1-Step	MDO 2-Step
Concrete Surface	Coarse/Grainy	Smooth to Glossy	Matte	Matte
Sugaring	Some	None	Minimal - None	Minimal - None
Grain/Patch Transfer	Heavy	Slight	Moderate	Very Slight
Maximum Reuse by System:				
Vertical/Metal Edges	---	---	---	---
Vertical Gang Forms	---	200	25	5
Vertical Job Built	10	50	20	25
Horizontal	8	35	10	15
Approximate Weight:				
Dry (lb/sf)	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.1
Wet (lb/sf)	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.4
Relative Cost (\$/sf)	\$1.23	\$1.31	\$1.14	\$1.20
Cost/Use (Job Built)	\$0.308	\$0.066	\$0.095	\$0.080

