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Should I Use Hidden Deck Fasteners or Deck Screws When I Build a Deck?

Posted by Arthur Beam on August 01, 2017

If you've decided to build a new deck on your home, you probably have a good idea what kind of deck boards you'd like, along with color and grain. But have you thought about how you'll attach those deck boards together? That is, what kind of deck screws or hidden deck fasteners you'll use?

There are pros and cons to using [hidden deck fasteners](#) or [traditional deck screws](#), but they should definitely not be an afterthought, as they make quite an aesthetic and performance difference in your deck. Choose the wrong screws or fasteners and you'll have stained deck boards that squeak or screws that pop above the deck board surface.



Decking is made from many kinds of materials – hardwoods, softwoods, PVC, composite material, cedar, treated wood and more. And for every kind of material, there is a specialized screw or fastener to cut into the deck boards without splintering or puckering, and to maximize hold. That's why it's important to match the hidden fastener or deck screw to the deck board material.

Pros and cons of traditional deck screws (face screws)

Pros:

Inexpensive, fast installation, no special tools required.

Cons:

The challenge in getting a traditional deck screw to hold tight to the deck boards is simply weather: Rain, heat, freezing temperatures, ice, snow, and humidity expand and shrink deck boards regularly. This may cause boards to loosen over time. Additionally, [screws](#) can sometimes stain wood decking, or cause wood to split, which allows water to enter the boards. This can cause the deck screw to rise above the

surface of the deck board, which you might discover underfoot.

Tips:

- Face screws are faster to install than hidden fasteners and require no special tools, which is why they're very popular with the do-it-yourself crowd.
- If you're installing a PVC or composite deck, use deck screws specifically made for these materials. The special threads and heads on these screws are designed to grab the material better and resist cracking the boards.
- Corrosion-resistant deck screws are a must, especially when installing a wood deck.
- Fasteners which corrode may leave a blue-black mark on the deck. HDG stainless steel screws are recommended.
- If your deck is a softwood deck, we suggest you use a hidden fastening system, as traditional screws will surely work their way out of softwood.

Pros and cons of hidden deck fasteners

Pros:

Generally speaking, hidden deck fasteners allow for more movement in the decking than deck screws. They are most often used with composite or PVC decking and should only be used with hardwoods which are dimensionally sound. Hidden fasteners create a more uniform and natural look than face screws and they don't have to be replaced as often.

Hidden deck screws secure the deck boards from the sides of the boards, where they are less likely to get wet. That means they are less likely to degrade and allow water and ice to leak between the deck boards. This increases the life of your deck.

Hidden deck fasteners provide better aesthetic appeal, because they're invisible. It's sometimes a challenge to make traditional deck screws blend in with the deck boards, given the wide choice in colors and grains. Hidden fasteners do their work out of sight.

Cons:

Hidden deck fasteners are more expensive than screws, but rarely need to be replaced.

Some hidden fastener systems do not provide the same level of horizontal bracing as deck screws do.

Special, dedicated tools may be needed to install the hidden fasteners. For instance, the [Camo Hidden Fastening System](#) attaches wood or composite decking directly to the sub-structure, with no pre-drilling required. A Camo Marksman tool and driver bits are required for installation.

Tips:

- On large decks or high decks, solid blocking between joists, or cross bracing may be recommended.

Choosing a deck screw or hidden deck fastener for your deck project can seem overwhelming, but we're here to help! [Contact us today](#) with any questions you have about your new deck.

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