

Tuckpointing Costs in Texas: What You'll Really Pay in 2026

A Straight Price Guide for Texas Homeowners

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Chapter 1: What Tuckpointing Really Is (and What It Isn't)

If you own a brick home in Texas, somebody is going to say the word "tuckpointing" to you sooner or later. It might be a contractor at your door, a home inspector writing up a report, or a neighbor who just had it done. Before we talk about what brick tuckpointing costs in Texas, you need to know what the word actually means — because half the confusion in this business starts with people using the wrong word for the job.

Here's the short version. Your brick walls are held together by mortar — the gray stuff between the bricks. Mortar is the weak link by design. It's supposed to be softer than the brick so that when the wall moves — and every wall moves — the mortar gives instead of the brick cracking. After twenty to thirty years of Texas sun, rain, and soil movement, that mortar starts to crumble, crack, and fall out. Repointing is the job of cutting out the bad mortar and packing in new mortar. That's the structural repair.

Tuckpointing, strictly speaking, is a decorative technique on

top of repointing. After the joints are filled with new mortar, a thin ribbon of contrasting mortar — usually white or cream, three or four millimeters wide — is tucked into the center of each joint. It makes the brickwork look crisp and precise, like fine cabinetry. True tuckpointing takes two mortar applications and a steady hand, and it costs more — typically 30 to 60 percent more in labor than plain repointing.

Now here's the thing nobody tells you: in Texas, and across most of America, when a contractor says "tuckpointing," he almost always means plain repointing. The decorative ribbon technique is rare in residential Texas work. The broad usage has become standard — even if it's technically imprecise, it's what the whole trade means by it now. So when I say tuckpointing in this book, I mean the job you're actually buying: cutting out failed mortar and putting in new mortar that matches. If somebody ever quotes you true decorative tuckpointing, they'll say so, and the price will tell you.

Why does the distinction matter for cost? Because it changes the number. Standard repointing runs roughly \$5 to \$12 per square foot in most markets. True decorative tuckpointing runs \$7 to \$25 or more per square foot. If a bid comes in at the low end and promises "tuckpointing," you're getting

repointing — which is almost certainly what you need anyway.

The rest of this book is about the real 2026 numbers: what the job costs, what moves the price, and how to tell an honest bid from a cheap one that'll cost you twice.

Chapter 2: The 2026 Price Ranges — What Brick Tuckpointing Costs in Texas

Let's get to the numbers. I'm going to give you the ranges the way the national cost data reports them for 2026, and then I'll tell you where Texas sits inside those ranges.

Per square foot. The going national range for tuckpointing and repointing in 2026 is \$5 to \$25 per square foot, with most residential work landing between \$10 and \$25 per square foot according to Angi's 2026 contractor data. Masonry contractors typically charge \$50 to \$100 per hour for this kind of labor. The wide range exists because a square foot of easy ground-level wall and a square foot of second-story chimney are two completely different jobs — we'll break that apart in the next chapter.

Per project. For a typical defined job — say an 8-by-10-foot section of wall, about 80 square feet — expect \$400 to \$2,000. A standard chimney runs \$500 to \$2,500, with the national average around \$1,200. Small repairs can be as little as \$300. Large or complex chimneys — tall, ornate, hard to reach — can run far higher.

Whole house. Repointing the mortar on an entire 2,500-square-foot house — roughly 2,000 square feet of actual wall area — runs \$10,000 to \$50,000. That's a big range, and it should be, because "whole house" covers everything from a single-story ranch with easy access to a two-story with decorative brickwork and scaffolding everywhere.

Where Texas lands. Texas labor rates for masons run in line with the national middle. What pushes Texas jobs around inside those ranges isn't the hourly rate — it's the conditions. Texas heat means mortar work gets scheduled around it. Texas clay soil means walls move, which means more joint failure and sometimes deeper cut-outs. And Texas brick veneer — the standard construction on most DFW homes — means the repointing is happening on a single wythe of brick over a wood frame, which is straightforward work for a good mason but unforgiving of a bad one.

The honest summary: for a normal Texas home, budget \$10 to \$20 per square foot for straightforward repointing, more when height, access, or matching gets complicated. If a bid comes in under \$5 a square foot for real cut-and-repoint work, something's being skipped. We'll get to exactly what in Chapter 6.

Chapter 3: What Moves the Number Up or Down

Two houses, same square footage of wall, can get bids thousands apart. Here's why. Every one of these is a legitimate cost driver — when a contractor explains which ones apply to your job, you're talking to an honest man.

Height and access. This is the biggest one. Work below eight feet is one price. Work above eight feet is another — typically \$8 to \$30 per square foot — because now you're paying for scaffolding or lift equipment. Scaffolding alone runs \$200 to \$600 on a typical job. A chimney two stories up with a steep roof pitch is the most expensive tuckpointing per square foot you'll buy, because the mason is working in the hardest spot on the house.

How much mortar is actually failed. Not every joint needs cutting. On a wall where 20 percent of the joints are shot, the mason cuts and repoints that 20 percent. On a wall where the mortar is powdering everywhere, it's the whole wall. A good contractor measures and tells you the actual square footage of deteriorated joint — a bad one quotes the whole wall

either way. Ask: "How many square feet of joint are you cutting out?" The answer should be a number, not a shrug.

Depth of cut. Proper repointing cuts the old mortar out to a depth of at least half an inch to an inch — the National Park Service guidance most good masons follow is in that range, and many Texas masons cut deeper, an inch and a quarter or more, on badly deteriorated joints. Deeper cut-outs take longer. A bid that's much cheaper than the others is often cutting shallow — scraping the surface instead of getting to sound mortar. Shallow work looks fine for a year and fails early.

Mortar matching. This is the craft part. The new mortar has to match the old in strength, color, and texture — and critically, it must not be harder than the brick. On a 1970s DFW brick veneer home, that's usually a standard Type N mortar and the match is straightforward. On older or historic brick, the original mortar may be soft lime mortar, and putting hard modern mortar against soft old brick will crack the brick faces within a few years. Matching takes test batches, dry runs, and a mason who knows his materials. It costs more than a bag of premix and a prayer.

Brick condition. Sometimes the mason opens up a wall and

finds that the problem isn't just mortar — bricks are spalled, cracked, or loose. Replacing individual brick units adds cost. A chimney with a failed crown or bad flashing discovered mid-job is the classic example: the tuckpointing bid was \$1,200, and now there's another conversation. Good contractors warn you upfront that hidden conditions can change the number. Get that warning in writing.

Cleanup and protection. Real tuckpointing makes dust — a lot of it. Grinding out joints throws mortar dust across everything nearby. The bid should include protecting windows, flashing, landscaping, and adjacent surfaces, and cleaning up without leaving mortar haze on the brick faces. If one bid is hundreds less and doesn't mention protection or cleanup, that's where the difference went.

Chapter 4: Chimney Tuckpointing — The Most Common Job in Texas

More tuckpointing bids in Texas are written for chimneys than for anything else. The chimney takes the worst beating on the house: full sun, driving rain, freeze-thaw in a North Texas winter, and constant thermal cycling from the flue. The mortar on a chimney fails first, and when it fails, water gets in — and water in a chimney is how you get a \$5,000 rebuild instead of a \$1,200 repoint.

The 2026 numbers for chimney tuckpointing: \$500 to \$2,500 for a standard project, averaging around \$1,200 nationally. Per square foot, chimney work runs \$8 to \$30 because it's almost always high work with access costs. Scaffolding adds \$200 to \$600. Permits, where the city requires them, run up to \$300.

What makes a chimney job land at \$500 versus \$2,500? Three things: how high it is, how bad the mortar is, and what else is wrong. A single-story chimney with moderate joint deterioration and easy roof access is a \$500 to \$900 job. A two-story chimney with deeply failed mortar, ornate

corbelling that has to be hand-worked, and a steep roof is a \$1,800 to \$2,500 job. And if the crown is cracked, the flashing is shot, or the flue liner is damaged, those are separate repairs with separate prices — chimney repairs beyond tuckpointing run \$200 to \$850 for crack and flashing fixes, and \$500 to \$15,000 for crown replacement, leaning stacks, or rebuilding above the roofline.

Here's what I tell every homeowner: when the mason is up on your chimney, have him look at the crown and the flashing while he's there. The incremental cost of an inspection is nothing, and catching a cracked crown early is the difference between a tube of crown sealant and a rebuild. A contractor who volunteers this is a keeper.

Chapter 5: Whole-House Tuckpointing — When the Whole Envelope Needs It

Sometimes it's not one wall or one chimney. On a 30-year-old brick home in Texas that's never been repointed, the mortar can be failing everywhere — and doing it piecemeal, one wall a year, costs more in the long run than doing the whole envelope at once. Mobilization, scaffolding, and setup get spread across the full job instead of repeated five times.

The range, again: \$10,000 to \$50,000 for a typical 2,500-square-foot home with about 2,000 square feet of wall area. The low end is a single-story home with straightforward access and standard mortar. The high end is a two-story with complex architecture, decorative brickwork, extensive scaffolding, and custom mortar matching.

Before you sign a whole-house job, get these answers:

1. **Exactly which walls, in square feet.** The bid should list each elevation and its square footage. "Whole house" without numbers is not a bid, it's a wish.
2. **What percentage of joints are being cut.** On a whole-house job it's often most of them, but get the number.

3. **The mortar spec.** What type, what mix, and how it's being matched. "Matching mortar" in writing.
4. **The schedule.** A whole-house repoint is days to weeks of work. Dust, noise, scaffolding in your yard. Know the plan.
5. **The warranty.** What does he guarantee, and for how long? Get it in writing.

A whole-house job is also the moment to address everything at once: lintels that need attention, weep holes that are clogged, flashing that needs resealing. Bundling related masonry work into one mobilization saves real money versus calling the mason back three times.

Chapter 6: Reading a Bid — and Spotting the One That's Too Cheap

This is the chapter that saves you money. In fifty years, I've seen every version of the too-cheap bid, and they all rhyme.

The honest bid has: square footage of joint to be cut, depth of cut, mortar type and matching method, access equipment listed, protection and cleanup described, a schedule, and a warranty in writing. It also has the contractor's name, license information where applicable, and insurance.

The too-cheap bid is missing at least two of those. The most common skips:

- **No cut depth specified.** He's planning to scrape the joints and smear new mortar over the top. It'll look good for a season. Then it pops.
- **"Matching mortar" with no method.** He's using one bag of gray for the whole house. Your 1990s buff mortar joints will have gray racing stripes.
- **No access equipment line.** He's planning to do second-story work off a ladder, or he hasn't thought about it, and the price goes up mid-job when reality

arrives.

- **No protection or cleanup.** Your windows, your landscaping, your driveway — that's your problem now.
- **Cash price, no paperwork.** No contract, no warranty, no recourse. The cheapest bid in Texas is always the one with no paper.

Here's the rule I give every homeowner: throw out the lowest bid and the highest bid, then interview the middle. The lowest is cutting something. The highest might be gold-plating. The middle, interviewed properly, is usually the honest job. And "interview" means asking the questions in this chapter and listening to whether the answers are specific or vague. Specific is honest. Vague is a warning.

One more thing: a legitimate mason prices by the job — how long it takes, how much material, what access costs. That's why old-timers will tell you they figure a day rate and estimate the days. Per-square-foot pricing is a useful way to compare bids, but the real price comes from the real scope. If a contractor gives you a per-foot price without measuring your walls, he's guessing. Make him measure.

Chapter 7: Tuckpointing vs. Repointing — Which Do You Actually Need?

For 95 percent of Texas homeowners, the answer is repointing: cut out the failed mortar, pack in new matched mortar, tool the joint to match the original profile. That's the structural repair, and it's what protects your wall.

True decorative tuckpointing — the thin contrasting ribbon — is a restoration aesthetic. You see it on historic buildings and high-end restoration work. It adds 30 to 60 percent to the labor cost and buys you zero additional structural life. Both techniques last 20 to 30 years with standard mortar, 30 to 50-plus with lime mortar. The tuck line is jewelry, not structure.

So when do you actually want the decorative version? When the building is historic and the original had it, or when you specifically want the crisp, fine-jointed look and you're willing to pay for the artistry. For a 1985 brick veneer home in Arlington, it's money spent on looks that the wall doesn't need.

What matters far more than the technique name is the mortar itself. The single most important technical decision in

the whole job is the mortar mix — and the rule is simple: the new mortar must never be harder than the brick. On modern Texas brick veneer, standard Type N mortar is right. On older, softer brick — pre-1930s, handmade, or historic — you need a softer, high-lime mortar. Put hard Portland-heavy mortar against soft old brick and the brick faces will spall off within a few years. The mortar is supposed to be the sacrificial element. When a contractor can't tell you what mortar type he's using and why, that's your sign to keep looking.

Chapter 8: Timing — When Does Mortar Actually Need It?

Mortar doesn't fail on a schedule, but it fails on a pattern. In Texas, here's what to watch:

Age. Twenty to thirty years is the normal service life of mortar joints on a Texas home. If your house was built in the late 90s and never repointed, you're in the window. That doesn't mean it's failing — it means it's time to look.

The screwdriver test. Take a flat screwdriver and drag it firmly across a mortar joint in a few spots around the house. If the mortar powders, crumbles, or flakes out, it's failing. If the screwdriver just leaves a mark on hard mortar, you're fine. Check the chimney, the south and west walls (sun and weather hit hardest), and anywhere sprinklers spray the wall.

The signs. Recessed joints where the mortar has worn back from the brick face. Crumbling mortar on the ground at the base of the wall. White staining (efflorescence) that keeps coming back. Small cracks stair-stepping through joints. Any of these means the mortar is done protecting the wall and

water is getting in.

The Texas accelerators. Two things kill Texas mortar faster than age alone. First, sprinklers spraying brick walls daily — constant wet-dry cycling destroys joints. Redirect them. Second, our clay soil moves walls, and moving walls crack mortar. If you're seeing fresh stair-step cracking through mortar joints, that's not just age — that's movement, and it deserves a look before you repoint over it. Repointing a wall that's actively moving is painting a sinking ship. Fix the movement first.

Chapter 9: DIY vs. Hiring It Out

I'll be straight with you: repointing is one of the most DIY-attempted and DIY-regretted jobs in masonry. The materials cost almost nothing — a bag of mortar is cheap. It's all labor and skill. A three-man crew might do 400 square feet on a good day and 100 on a hard one. That's the reality of the work: slow, physical, and precise.

The DIY case: a small, ground-level area — a few square feet of garden wall, a mailbox — where the stakes are low and you can take your time. Even then, match the mortar, cut deep enough, and tool the joints properly.

The hire-it-out case: everything else. Chimneys, second-story work, large areas, anything where matching matters, anything where the wall is structural. A poor repointing job looks horrible and is nearly impossible to fix — you can't un-smear bad mortar work without damaging the brick. The old-timers on the masonry forums say it plain: don't skimp if you want it done right. This is skilled work, and the skill is in the hands, not the bag.

If you do hire it out in Texas, hire a mason — not a

handyman, not a painter who "also does brick." Repointing is masonry work. Ask how many repointing jobs he's done, ask to see one, and ask what mortar he'll use and why. The answers tell you everything.

Chapter 10: Walk Your Own Walls — A

Homeowner's Inspection Guide

Before you call anybody, walk your own house. Fifteen minutes, a screwdriver, and this chapter will tell you whether you need a mason this year or in five years — and it'll make you a much smarter buyer when the bids come in.

Start at the chimney. It's the canary. Look at the mortar joints from the ground with binoculars if you have them. You're looking for joints that have receded — worn back from the face of the brick — or that are visibly crumbling. Check the crown, the concrete or mortar cap on top: if it's cracked, water is going straight down the flue chase. A cracked crown plus bad joints is the combination that turns a repoint into a rebuild, so catch it early.

Walk the sun sides. In Texas, that's south and west. Sun and weather hit these walls hardest, and the mortar fails here first. Drag your screwdriver firmly across several joints at different heights. Sound mortar resists — the screwdriver leaves a mark but the joint stays solid. Failed mortar powders, flakes, or scoops out. Test a dozen spots per wall. If

half of them fail, that wall needs work.

Check under windows and at sills. Water concentrates here. Look for white staining running down from sills — that's efflorescence, mineral salts being carried out of the mortar by water. A little is cosmetic. A lot, especially if it keeps coming back after rain, means water is moving through the wall and the joints are the highway.

Look at the base of the walls. Mortar crumbs piled at the base of a wall are the wall telling on itself. Some grit is normal aging. Piles of it mean active deterioration.

Check where sprinklers hit. If a sprinkler head sprays your brick wall every morning, go look at exactly that spot. You'll almost always find the worst joints on the house right there. Redirect the head today — it's free, and it stops the damage from getting worse while you schedule the repair.

Note what you find. Write it down: which walls, roughly how many square feet of bad joint, chimney condition, anything else odd. When the mason arrives, hand him your notes. A homeowner who's done the walk gets better bids — the contractor knows you're paying attention, and he prices accordingly.

What you're not doing on this walk: diagnosing structure. If you see stair-step cracks running through mortar joints over a long distance, horizontal cracks, or a wall that's bulging or leaning — stop. That's not a tuckpointing job, that's a structural evaluation. Call a foundation or masonry professional and say exactly what you see. Repointing over active movement is money thrown at a moving target.

Chapter 11: Hiring Right in North Texas

You've got the numbers. You've got the bid-reading checklist. Here's how to close it out.

Get three bids. Not one, not five — three. Throw out the outlier on each end if there is one, interview the middle. Check that he's insured. Ask for a recent repointing job you can drive by — not a photo, an address. Photos lie; drive-bys don't.

Get everything in writing: scope in square feet, cut depth, mortar type and color match method, access plan, protection and cleanup, schedule, price, payment terms, and warranty. Never pay the full amount upfront. A deposit for materials is normal; the balance on completion is the rule.

And here's the Texas-specific advice: hire somebody who works in your soil and your weather. A mason who's spent twenty years on DFW brick veneer knows what our clay does to walls, knows which neighborhoods have the soft brick, knows how to schedule around a Texas summer so the mortar cures right. Local knowledge is worth money on this job.

If you're in the Fort Worth–Dallas area and want a straight bid on [brick tuckpointing in Fort Worth](<https://championbrickrepair.com>) or anywhere in DFW, that's what we do. And if you want to keep learning before you call anybody, my [free brick repair books] (<https://metro-foundation-repair.web.app/free-books/>) cover the rest of what your walls are trying to tell you — including the technical side, which the [Brick Industry Association technical notes](<https://www.gobrick.com>) document better than anyone.

The cheapest tuckpointing is the kind you only pay for once. Spend the money on the mason who measures, matches, and writes it down.

Chapter 12: The Mortar Types You'll Meet in Texas

Walk into any masonry supply in Texas and you'll hear three letters: N, S, and sometimes O. These are mortar types, and they're not interchangeable. The letter is about compressive strength — how hard the mortar gets — and picking the wrong one is the most expensive mistake in repointing.

Type N is the all-around workhorse: medium strength, good for most above-grade brick veneer in Texas. If your home was built after about 1960 and it's standard brick veneer, Type N is almost certainly what's on it now and what should go back in. It's the default for a reason.

Type S is stronger — higher Portland cement content, higher compressive strength. It belongs below grade, in structural masonry, and in places taking real lateral load. It does not belong smeared across the face of your 1980s brick veneer as a repointing mortar just because "stronger is better." Stronger is not better here. The mortar must be softer than the brick, always. Type S against standard residential brick concentrates stress in the brick faces, and you'll get spalling

— the faces popping off the brick — within a few years.

Type O and lime mortars are the soft ones. You'll meet them on pre-1930s brick, historic buildings, and handmade brick. Old lime mortar is soft, even self-healing to a degree — small cracks literally seal themselves through lime redeposition. If your house has this mortar and a contractor shows up with a bag of Type S, stop the job. Hard mortar on soft brick is a demolition in slow motion.

The rule, one more time, because it's the whole game: **the new mortar must match the old mortar's strength, and it must never be harder than the brick.** A good mason knows this the way a carpenter knows which end of the hammer to hold. If yours doesn't, he's not a mason.

Color matching is the visible half of the craft. Mortar color comes from the sand and the cement. Texas sands run from near-white to tan to reddish, and the original builder used whatever the local yard had that decade. Matching means test batches — small patches mixed, applied, and left to cure, because wet mortar and cured mortar are different colors. A mason who mixes one batch and goes is guessing. A mason who does test panels is matching.

Chapter 13: Texas Regions — Why DFW, Houston, and Austin Price Differently

Texas is not one masonry market. The brick, the soil, and the weather change enough across the state that the same job prices differently in different cities. Here's the honest breakdown.

Dallas–Fort Worth. The big market. Brick veneer over wood frame is the standard house — millions of them, built from the 1960s on. Our black clay soil moves, which means mortar takes abuse and repointing is common maintenance. Competition among masons is real, which keeps prices honest. The going range sits right in the national middle: \$10 to \$20 per square foot for straightforward work. The housing stock is mostly modern brick, so mortar matching is usually simple.

Houston. Heat, humidity, and rain — Houston mortar deals with more moisture cycling than anywhere else in Texas. The clay soil is just as active as DFW's. Prices run slightly higher than DFW on average, mostly because access and scheduling around weather cost money, and the labor market is tighter.

Same work, maybe 10 to 15 percent more.

Austin and Central Texas. Limestone country. A lot of Austin-area masonry is stone and limestone veneer, not just brick, and repointing stone is slower, fussier work — irregular joints, softer stone that chips if you look at it wrong. Expect the higher end of the ranges here, and make sure your mason has stone experience, not just brick.

West Texas and the Panhandle. Smaller markets, fewer masons, more travel time baked into bids. A straightforward job can cost more simply because the mason drove an hour each way. On the other hand, the dry climate is kinder to mortar — less moisture cycling means longer joint life.

The Rio Grande Valley and South Texas. Heat is the factor. Mortar has to be mixed and placed to cure properly in brutal temperatures, which means early-morning work and sometimes admixtures. An experienced local mason knows this; a cheap crew doesn't, and you'll see the difference in two summers.

The takeaway: when you see national ranges, put your city inside them honestly. DFW sits in the middle. Houston and Austin trend high. Rural anywhere trends high on small jobs

because of travel. And everywhere in Texas, the mason who knows your local brick and soil is worth a premium over the one who doesn't.

Chapter 14: What a Repointing Day Actually Looks Like

Most homeowners have never watched repointing happen. Here's the day, so you know what you're paying for and what "done right" looks like from your driveway.

Setup and protection. The crew arrives and the first hour isn't masonry — it's protection. Windows get masked or covered. Landscaping near the wall gets tarped. The AC condenser, the patio furniture, your car in the driveway — everything within dust range gets covered or moved. Grinding mortar makes fine dust that travels. A crew that skips this step is telling you who they are.

Cutting out. The mason cuts the failed joints with a grinder fitted with a tuckpointing blade or a mortar rake, or chisels them by hand on delicate work. Power tools are faster; hand tools are safer around soft brick and ornate work. Good masons use both — power where it's safe, hand where it matters. The dust is the worst part of the job, and on a windy Texas day it'll find everything. This is why the protection step matters.

Cleaning. The cut joints get brushed and blown clean. New mortar doesn't bond to dust. Some masons dampen the joints lightly before packing — old brick sucks the water out of fresh mortar too fast otherwise, which weakens the bond. This is craft knowledge, and it's the difference between joints that last thirty years and joints that last ten.

Packing and tooling. Fresh mortar goes in in layers, packed tight, then tooled to match the original joint profile — concave, flush, weathered, whatever the wall had. The tooling isn't just looks; the profile affects how water sheds off the joint. A concave joint sheds water. A sloppy joint holds it.

Cleanup. Mortar haze gets brushed off the brick faces before it sets. Tarps come up. Everything gets swept. The crew walks the wall with you.

A three-man crew on straightforward ground-level work might cut and repoint a few hundred square feet in a good day. On chimney work, high work, or fussy matching, it might be a hundred. When a contractor tells you your job is three days, now you know what those days contain. And when a bid seems high for the square footage, remember: you're not buying mortar. The materials are the cheapest part. You're buying the hands.

Chapter 15: Warranties — What the Guarantee Should Actually Say

A tuckpointing warranty is only as good as its words. Here's what to look for and what to walk away from.

What a real warranty covers: the workmanship — that the joints were properly cut, properly filled, properly tooled, and won't fail prematurely due to installation defects. A typical honest warranty on repointing workmanship runs two to five years. That sounds short until you understand what it's warranting: not that mortar lasts forever — it doesn't — but that the installation was correct.

What no honest warranty covers: the wall moving. If your foundation shifts and cracks the new mortar, that's not a mortar failure — that's a foundation problem, and no mason warranties against the earth moving. Same for new water intrusion from a failed roof or flashing above the work. The warranty covers the mason's work, not your house's other problems.

Red-flag warranty language: "Lifetime warranty on tuckpointing." Mortar has a service life. Anyone promising

lifetime on a wearing material is selling, not warranting. Also: a warranty that's verbal. If it's not written on the contract, it doesn't exist.

What to get in writing: the scope (square footage and locations), the mortar spec, the workmanship warranty term, and what's excluded. One page. If a contractor won't put the warranty in writing, the warranty is zero regardless of what he said at your kitchen table.

Chapter 16: When to Schedule — Texas

Seasons and Mortar

Mortar is chemistry, and chemistry cares about temperature. In Texas, that means timing matters.

The sweet spots are spring and fall — March through May, October through November in most of Texas. Moderate temperatures, manageable humidity, mortar cures at the right pace. This is also when every good mason is busiest, so book ahead.

Summer is doable but tricky. Fresh mortar in 105-degree Texas heat dries too fast — the surface sets before the joint has cured through, which weakens it. Good masons work early mornings, keep materials shaded, mist the work, and sometimes use admixtures that slow the set. Bad crews just go, and the joints pay for it in a few years. If your job has to happen in August, hire the mason who talks about heat management without being asked.

Winter in North Texas brings the other edge: mortar can't freeze before it cures. Overnight freezes in December and January can ruin fresh joints. Masons watch the forecast and

tent or heat the work when needed — which adds cost. A bid in January should mention cold-weather protection, or the contractor isn't thinking.

The real answer: the best time is when the mortar needs it and you've found the right mason. Don't let failing joints wait a year for perfect weather — water getting in does more damage in a year than a summer cure ever will. But if you have the luxury of timing, spring and fall, booked a month out with a mason who measures and writes things down.

Chapter 17: Questions Homeowners Ask Me

Does homeowners insurance cover tuckpointing? Almost never. Insurance covers sudden damage — storm, impact, that kind of thing. Worn-out mortar is maintenance, and maintenance is the homeowner's job. The exception: if a covered event damages the wall — a tree falls on it, a tornado tears flashing off and water destroys the joints — the resulting masonry repair can be part of the claim. But "my mortar is thirty years old" is not a claim. Don't let a contractor tell you otherwise.

Can you just seal the brick instead of repointing? Sealers have their place, but they're not a substitute for failed mortar. Sealing over crumbling joints traps water behind the sealer and accelerates the damage. Repoint first, then talk about whether a breathable sealer makes sense for your wall. And "breathable" is non-negotiable — non-breathable sealers on brick veneer are a moisture disaster.

How long does repointing last? Twenty to thirty years with standard mortar in Texas conditions. Thirty to fifty-plus with lime mortar on historic work. The chimney goes first —

budget for it on a shorter cycle than the walls.

Will repointing fix my cracked bricks? Repointing fixes mortar. Cracked brick units get replaced individually — the mason cuts out the bad brick and sets a new one. If the wall has widespread cracked bricks, that's a different conversation about what's moving the wall.

Should I repoint before selling the house? If the mortar is visibly failing, yes — it's one of the highest-return exterior fixes. Bad mortar photographs terribly and every inspector flags it. A \$1,500 chimney repoint can save a \$10,000 inspection negotiation. If the mortar's fine, leave it alone and spend the money elsewhere.

What's the difference between tuckpointing and "mortar repair"? Nothing, in practice. "Mortar repair," "joint repair," "repointing," "tuckpointing" — in Texas residential work, these all mean the same job: fix the mortar joints. Don't pay more because the bid uses a fancier word.

A Final Word Before You Call

You've now got something most homeowners never get before hiring a mason: the real numbers, the real cost

drivers, and the ability to read a bid like somebody who's done this before. That's worth money. Use it.

The mortar on your walls has one job — be the part that gives so the brick doesn't have to. When it's done its twenty or thirty years, replace it with the right mortar, cut deep enough, matched right, by hands that know the work. Pay the honest price once instead of the cheap price twice.

Your walls have been talking. Now you speak the language.

About the Author

Travis Nech has spent fifty years in Texas brick and masonry — laying it, repairing it, and teaching homeowners what their walls are saying. He owns Champion Brick Repair, serving the Dallas–Fort Worth metroplex. Call (817) 900-6324 for a straight estimate, no games.