

# Construction Terms Beginning With Letter: S

**Saddle-** A small second roof built behind the back side of a fireplace chimney to divert water around the chimney. Also, the plate at the bottom of some—usually exterior—door openings. Sometimes called a threshold.

**Sack mix-** The amount of Portland cement in a cubic yard of concrete mix. Generally, 5 or 6 sack is required in a foundation wall.

**Sales contract** - A contract between a buyer and seller which should explain: (1) What the purchase includes, (2) What guarantees there are, (3) When the buyer can move in, (4) What the closing costs are, and (5) What recourse the parties have if the contract is not fulfilled or if the buyer cannot get a mortgage commitment at the agreed upon time.

**Sand float finish-** Lime that is mixed with sand, resulting in a textured finish on a wall.

**Sanitary sewer-** A sewer system designed for the collection of waste water from the bathroom, kitchen and laundry drains, and is usually not designed to handle storm water.

**Sash-** A single light frame containing one or more lights of glass. The frame that holds the glass in a window, often the movable part of the window.

**Sash balance-** A device, usually operated by a spring and designed to hold a single hung window vent up and in place

**Saturated felt-** A felt which is impregnated with tar or asphalt.

**Schedule (window, door, mirror)-** A table on the blueprints that list the sizes, quantities and locations of the windows, doors and mirrors.

**Scrap out-** The removal of all drywall material and debris after the home is “hung out” (installed) with drywall.

**Scratch coat-** The first coat of plaster, which is scratched to form a bond for a second coat.

**Screed, concrete-** To level off concrete to the correct elevation during a concrete pour.

**Screed, plaster-** A small strip of wood, usually the thickness of the plaster coat, used as a guide for plastering.

**Scribing-** Cutting and fitting woodwork to an irregular surface.

**Scupper-** (1) An opening for drainage in a wall, curb or parapet. (2) The drain in a downspout or flat roof, usually connected to the downspout.

**Sealer-** A finishing material, either clear or pigmented, that is usually applied directly over raw wood for the purpose of sealing the wood surface.

**Seasoning-** Drying and removing moisture from green wood in order to improve its usability.

**Self-sealing shingles-** Shingles containing factory-applied strips or spots of self-sealing adhesive.

**Semigloss paint or enamel-** A paint or enamel made so that its coating, when dry, has some luster but is not very glossy. Bathrooms and kitchens are normally painted semi-gloss

**Septic system-** An on site waste water treatment system. It usually has a septic tank which promotes the biological digestion of the waste, and a drain field which is designed to let the left over liquid soak into the ground. Septic systems and permits are usually sized by the number of bedrooms in a house.

**Service entrance panel-** Main power cabinet where electricity enters a home wiring system.

**Service equipment-** Main control gear at the service entrance, such as circuit breakers, switches, and fuses.

**Service lateral-** Underground power supply line.

**Setback Thermostat-** A thermostat with a clock which can be programmed to come on or go off at various temperatures and at different times of the day/week. Usually used as the heating or cooling system thermostat.

**Settlement-** Shifts in a structure, usually caused by freeze-thaw cycles underground.

**Sewage ejector-** A pump used to 'lift' waste water to a gravity sanitary sewer line. Usually used in basements and other locations which are situated below the level of the side sewer.

**Sewer lateral-** The portion of the sanitary sewer which connects the interior waste water lines to the main sewer lines. The side sewer is usually buried in several feet of soil and runs from the house to the sewer line. It is usually 'owned' by the sewer utility, must be maintained by the owner and may only be serviced by utility approved contractors. Sometimes called side sewer.

**Sewer stub-** The junction at the municipal sewer system where the home's sewer line is connected.

**Sewer tap-** The physical connection point where the home's sewer line connects to the main municipal sewer line.

**Shake-** A wood roofing material, normally cedar or redwood. Produced by splitting a block of the wood along the grain line. Modern shakes are sometimes machine sawn on one side. See shingle.

**Shear block-** Plywood that is face nailed to short (2 X 4's or 2 X 6's) wall studs (above a door or window, for example). This is done to prevent the wall from sliding and collapsing.

**Sheathing, sheeting-** The structural wood panel covering, usually OSB or plywood, used over studs, floor joists or rafters/trusses of a structure.

**Shed roof-** A roof containing only one sloping plane.

**Sheet metal work-** All components of a house employing sheet metal, such as flashing, gutters, and downspouts.

**Sheet metal duct work-** The heating system. Usually round or rectangular metal pipes and sheet metal (for Return Air) and installed for distributing warm (or cold) air from the furnace to rooms in the home.

**Sheet rock- Drywall-Wall board or gypsum-** A manufactured panel made out of gypsum plaster and encased in a thin cardboard. Usually 1/2" thick and 4' x 8' or 4' x 12' in size. The 'joint compound'. 'Green board' type drywall has a greater resistance to moisture than regular (white) plasterboard and is used in bathrooms and other "wet areas".

**Shim-** A small piece of scrap lumber or shingle, usually wedge shaped, which when forced behind a furring strip or framing member forces it into position. Also used when installing doors and placed between the door jamb legs and 2 X 4 door trimmers. Metal shims are wafer 1 1/2" X 2" sheet metal of various thickness' used to fill gaps in wood framing members, especially at bearing point locations.

**Shingles-** Roof covering of asphalt. asbestos, wood, tile, slate, or other material cut to stock lengths, widths, and thickness'.

**Shingles, siding-** Various kinds of shingles, used over sheathing for exterior wall covering of a structure.

**Short circuit-** A situation that occurs when hot and neutral wires come in contact with each other. Fuses and circuit breakers protect against fire that could result from a short.

**Shutter-** Usually lightweight louvered decorative frames in the form of doors located on the sides of a window. Some shutters are made to close over the window for protection.

**Side sewer-** The portion of the sanitary sewer which connects the interior waste water lines to the main sewer lines. The side sewer is usually buried in several feet of soil and runs from the house to the sewer line. It is usually 'owned' by the sewer utility, must be maintained by the owner and may only be serviced by utility approved contractors. Sometimes called sewer lateral.

**Siding-** The finished exterior covering of the outside walls of a frame building.

**Siding, (lap siding)-** Slightly wedge-shaped boards used as horizontal siding in a lapped pattern over the exterior sheathing. Varies in butt thickness from 1/2 to 3/4 inch and in widths up to 12".

**Sill-** (1) The 2 X 4 or 2 X 6 wood plate framing member that lays flat against and bolted to the foundation wall (with anchor bolts) and upon which the floor joists are installed. Normally the sill plate is treated lumber. (2) The member forming the lower side of an opening, as a door sill or window sill.

**Sill cock-** An exterior water faucet (hose bib).

**Sill plate (mudsill)**- Bottom horizontal member of an exterior wall frame which rests on top a foundation, sometimes called mudsill. Also sole plate, bottom member of an interior wall frame.

**Sill seal**- Fiberglass or foam insulation installed between the foundation wall and sill (wood) plate. Designed to seal any cracks or gaps.

**Single hung window**- A window with one vertically sliding sash or window vent.

**Skylight**- A more or less horizontal window located on the roof of a building.

**Slab, concrete**- Concrete pavement, i.e. driveways, garages, and basement floors.

**Slab, door**- A rectangular door without hinges or frame.

**Slab on grade**- A type of foundation with a concrete floor which is placed directly on the soil. The edge of the slab is usually thicker and acts as the footing for the walls.

**Slag**- Concrete cement that sometimes covers the vertical face of the foundation void material.

**Sleeper**- Usually, a wood member embedded in concrete, as in a floor, that serves to support and to fasten the subfloor or flooring.

**Sleeve(s)**- Pipe installed under the concrete driveway or sidewalk, and that will be used later to run sprinkler pipe or low voltage wire.

**Slope**- The incline angle of a roof surface, given as a ratio of the rise (in inches) to the run (in feet). See also pitch.

**Slump**- The "wetness" of concrete. A 3 inch slump is dryer and stiffer than a 5 inch slump.

**Soffit**- The area below the eaves and overhangs. The underside where the roof overhangs the walls. Usually the underside of an overhanging cornice.

**Soil pipe**- A large pipe that carries liquid and solid wastes to a sewer or septic tank.

**Soil stack**- A plumbing vent pipe that penetrates the roof.

**Sole plate**- The bottom, horizontal framing member of a wall that's attached to the floor sheathing and vertical wall studs.

**Solid bridging**- A solid member placed between adjacent floor joists near the center of the span to prevent joists or rafters from twisting.

**Sonotube**- Round, large cardboard tubes designed to hold wet concrete in place until it hardens.

**Sound attenuation**- Sound proofing a wall or subfloor, generally with fiberglass insulation.

**Space heat**- Heat supplied to the living space, for example, to a room or the living area of a building.

**Spacing**- The distance between individual members or shingles in building construction.

**Span**- The clear distance that a framing member carries a load without support between structural supports. The horizontal distance from eaves to eaves.

**Spec home-** A house built before it is sold. The builder speculates that he can sell it at a profit.

**Specifications or Specs-** A narrative list of materials, methods, model numbers, colors, allowances, and other details which supplement the information contained in the blue prints. Written elaboration in specific detail about construction materials and methods. Written to supplement working drawings.

**Splash block-** Portable concrete (or vinyl) channel generally placed beneath an exterior sill cock (water faucet) or downspout in order to receive roof drainage from downspouts and to divert it away from the building.

**Square-** A unit of measure-100 square feet-usually applied to roofing and siding material. Also, a situation that exists when two elements are at right angles to each other. Also a tool for checking this.

**Square-tab shingles-** Shingles on which tabs are all the same size and exposure.

**Squeegie-** Fine pea gravel used to grade a floor (normally before concrete is placed).

**Stack (trusses)-** To position trusses on the walls in their correct location.

**Standard practices of the trade(s)-** One of the more common basic and minimum construction standards. This is another way of saying that the work should be done in the way it is normally done by the average professional in the field.

**Starter strip-** Asphalt roofing applied at the eaves that provides protection by filling in the spaces under the cutouts and joints of the first course of shingles.

**Stair carriage or stringer-** Supporting member for stair treads. Usually a 2 X 12 inch plank notched to receive the treads; sometimes called a "rough horse."

**Stair landing-** A platform between flights of stairs or at the termination of a flight of stairs. Often used when stairs change direction. Normally no less than 3 ft. X 3 ft. square.

**Stair rise-** The vertical distance from stair tread to stair tread (and not to exceed 7 ½").

**Static vent-** A vent that does not include a fan.

**STC (Sound Transmission Class)-** The measure of sound stopping of ordinary noise.

**Steel inspection-** A municipal and/or engineers inspection of the concrete foundation wall, conducted before concrete is poured into the foundation panels. Done to insure that the rebar (reinforcing bar), rebar nets, void material, beam pocket plates, and basement window bucks are installed and wrapped with rebar and complies with the foundation plan.

**Step flashing-** Flashing application method used where a vertical surface meets a sloping roof plane. 6" X 6" galvanized metal bent at a 90 degree angle, and installed beneath siding and over the top of shingles. Each piece overlaps the one beneath it the entire length of the sloping roof (step by step).

**Stick built-** A house built without prefabricated parts. Also called conventional building.

**Stile**- An upright framing member in a panel door.

**Stool**- The flat molding fitted over the window sill between jambs and contacting the bottom rail of the lower sash. Also another name for toilet.

**Stop box**- Normally a cast iron pipe with a lid (@ 5" in diameter) that is placed vertically into the ground, situated near the water tap in the yard, and where a water cut-off valve to the home is located (underground). A long pole with a special end is inserted into the curb stop to turn off/on the water.

**Stop Order**- A formal, written notification to a contractor to discontinue some or all work on a project for reasons such as safety violations, defective materials or workmanship, or cancellation of the contract.

**Stops**- Moldings along the inner edges of a door or window frame. Also valves used to shut off water to a fixture.

**Stop valve**- A device installed in a water supply line, usually near a fixture, that permits an individual to shut off the water supply to one fixture without interrupting service to the rest of the system.

**Storm sash or storm window**-. An extra window usually placed outside of an existing one, as additional protection against cold weather.

**Storm sewer**- A sewer system designed to collect storm water and is separated from the waste water system.

**Story**- That part of a building between any floor or between the floor and roof.

**Strike**- The plate on a door frame that engages a latch or dead bolt.

**String, stringer**- A timber or other support for cross members in floors or ceilings. In stairs, the supporting member for stair treads. Usually a 2 X 12 inch plank notched to receive the treads

**Strip flooring**- Wood flooring consisting of narrow, matched strips.

**Structural floor**- A framed lumber floor that is installed as a basement floor *instead* of concrete. This is done on very expansive soils.

**Stub, stubbed**- To push through.

**Stucco**- Refers to an outside plaster finish made with Portland cement as its base.

**Stud**- A vertical wood framing member, also referred to as a wall stud, attached to the horizontal sole plate below and the top plate above. Normally 2 X 4's or 2 X 6's, 8' long (sometimes 92 5/8"). One of a series of wood or metal vertical structural members placed as supporting elements in walls and partitions.

**Stud framing**- A building method that distributes structural loads to each of a series of relatively lightweight studs. Contrasts with post-and-beam.

**Stud shoe-** A metal, structural bracket that reinforces a vertical stud. Used on an outside bearing wall where holes are drilled to accommodate a plumbing waste line.

**Subfloor-** The framing components of a floor to include the sill plate, floor joists, and deck sheeting over which a finish floor is to be laid.

**Sump-** Pit or large plastic bucket/barrel inside the home designed to collect ground water from a perimeter drain system.

**Sump pump-** A submersible pump in a sump pit that pumps any excess ground water to the outside of the home.

**Suspended ceiling-** A ceiling system supported by hanging it from the overhead structural framing.

**Sway brace-** Metal straps or wood blocks installed diagonally on the inside of a wall from bottom to top plate, to prevent the wall from twisting, racking, or falling over "domino" fashion.

**Switch-** A device that completes or disconnects an electrical circuit.

**Source:** <http://www.engineeringcivil.com/construction-terms-beginning-with-letter-s.html>