How to Remove Adhesive from Concrete

Adhesive residue (mastic) on a concrete floor can be a nightmare to remove, particularly if the glue has been there for a number of years and it has become rock hard. However, getting the glue off is possible with some hard work, determination and a willingness to try different methods to figure out which one works best in your case. Here are some of the tried and true methods for removing old adhesive from concrete. But before you start, don't forget to consider the option of putting your new floor right over the existing flooring and adhesive. It's a lot less work!

Things you'll need:

1. Chemical adhesive removers
2. Floor sander
3. Hot water and mop
4. Vacuum
5. Flooring scraper
6. Heavy duty grinder and coarse sandpaper

Difficulty: Moderately Easy

Instructions:

1. Using hot water, mop the floor in sections of about 4 square feet. Then using a flooring removal razor scraper, scrape the softened adhesive into small piles. Scoop up and discard the piles of adhesive.

2. Alternatively try chemical adhesive removers available at your local home or flooring store. Citrus based removers are usually less dangerous to the environment, but they often take longer to work. Apply the adhesive remover as per manufacturer's directions and give it time to soften the adhesive.

3. Use a flooring scraper to scrape the softened glue off the floor and dispose of it.

4. When working on a smooth concrete floor, a tool available at some rental outlets called a "tile and glue remover" may be your best option. This tool has a sharp blade about 8 inches long that moves back and forth like a large electric razor scraping the surface clean. As you can tell by its name, if you have an existing tile floor this may be the best option.

5. Attacking ridges of glue with a heavy-duty grinder and highly abrasive sandpaper will remove the adhesive. Once you have removed the largest ridges of adhesive, sanding the entire floor will clean the surface in anticipation of your new floor.
Tips & Warnings

- A number of common household products have also reportedly been used with varying degrees of success to loosen and remove mastic adhesive from concrete. Liquid fabric softener or water displacement lubricants supposedly soften adhesive enough that it can be scraped off.

- In some older applications, a black colored adhesive (called "cutback adhesive") was used to hold vinyl tiles. Both the tiles and the adhesive could contain asbestos. If you have old vinyl tiles or the adhesive residue on your concrete floor is black, you are much better off simply covering it with your new flooring. If that's not possible, hire a flooring specialist properly trained in dealing with asbestos to remove the adhesive. Your family's health is worth the cost.

- If you are using a chemical adhesive remover, read and follow the manufacturer's directions, wear eye protection and be sure the area is well ventilated.