

selecting concrete coverings

Garage renovations often begin with the goal of improving the appearance of a blah concrete floor. Lucky for you, good products abound at price points to fit most budgets.

Coat it with paint or epoxy

Latex concrete paint (often sold as porch-and-floor paint) offers an inexpensive, quick, and colorful covering. As long as you don't share your garage shop with a car (hot tires can damage the surface) or otherwise abuse it, concrete paint may fit your budget. A gallon sells for about \$21.

A two-part **epoxy** (Part A resin and Part B hardener) requires mixing before use. When the two liquids cure, they form an extremely hard and durable coating.

An inexpensive two-car garage kit sells for about \$100 at home centers. These products contain about 35 percent solids; the remaining volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and water evaporate as the epoxy cures. Professionally applied **100 percent solid epoxy** (no solvents and therefore no odor during application) runs about \$3.50–\$5.00/sq. ft. for a two-car garage. See *page 30* for do-it-yourself application details; the sidebar on the *next page* provides more details about selecting an epoxy.

Whether you apply paint or epoxy, thorough concrete preparation is key. Proper adhesion of most epoxy products requires

a process to provide “teeth” for the epoxy to grip the concrete. Chemical etching is the most common DIY approach; many pros prefer to grind the surface.

Cover it with flooring

Interlocking tiles provide numerous pattern options, a wide range of colors, and good cushioning. Tile squares come in different types—solid, perforated, and drain tiles—and their embossed surface patterns provide good traction and durability. Tiles commonly measure 12×12” or 24×24” and most systems include beveled pieces to transition to nontiled areas. This system installs in a matter of hours.

Sturdy **vinyl composition tile** (VCT) has more color and pattern options than any other flooring covered here. VCT must be installed with an adhesive, but its extreme durability and low cost make it a contender.

A new entry in the garage flooring market, **self-adhesive vinyl tile**, eliminates the messy step of applying an adhesive to the floor. For more details, see *page 36*.

Roll material for the garage installs much like indoor vinyl flooring. But because its own weight anchors it in place, you don't need to adhere garage vinyl with adhesives or tape. Roll coverings also offers welcome cushioning atop unforgiving concrete floors. 🌿

Behr latex concrete paint
homedepot.com



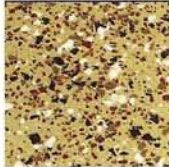

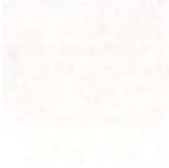


Rust-Oleum water-based epoxy coating
rustoleum.com

Wolverine 100 percent
solid epoxy coating
alphagarage.com

Race Deck interlocking tile
racedeck.com

Armstrong vinyl
composition tile (VCT)
armstrong.com

BLT self-adhesive
vinyl tile
bltllc.com

Flooring Type	Pros	Cons
 <p>Latex concrete paint \$21 for 400 sq. ft.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Least expensive solution • No seams • Easy to clean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Least durable • Dry and clean concrete a must for good adhesion • Requires cleaning of concrete, removal of old paint • Won't hide blemishes, divots, or small cracks
 <p>Water- or solvent-based epoxy coating \$120–\$200 for 400 sq. ft. (1 coat)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance to thawing salts and chemicals • No seams • Easy to clean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires extensive cleaning and etching of concrete before application • When applied too thick, product may yellow • Two-part versions can be tricky to mix and apply • Few color choices • Won't hide blemishes, divots, or small cracks • Evaporation can cause microporous surface (cavities trap grime)
 <p>100 percent solid epoxy coating \$450–\$2,200 for 400 sq. ft. (3 coats)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High durability • Resistance to thawing salts and chemicals • Wide variety of colors • No seams • Easy to clean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires extensive cleaning and etching of concrete before application • Two-part versions can be tricky to mix and apply • Doesn't hide large cracks (unless treated before primer coat) • Short "open" (application) time
 <p>Interlocking tile \$900–\$2,200 for 400 sq. ft.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good cushioning • Colors provide design options • Good traction • Breathable • Hides cracks, blemishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutting may be necessary for a perfect fit • Desired materials/colors may require a special order • Seams easy to spot • Dust, dirt get trapped in open-pattern tiles • Potential to trap water beneath tiles (promotes mildew and mold)
 <p>Vinyl composition tile (VCT) \$350 for 400 sq. ft.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely durable • Some cushioning • Wide range of colors and textures • Hides cracks, blemishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required adhesive can be messy • Cutting may be necessary for perfect fit • Alignment can be difficult for those not familiar with laying tile • Lots of joints
 <p>Self-adhesive vinyl tile \$1,200 for 400 sq. ft.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some cushioning • Good traction • Colors provide design options • Hides cracks, blemishes • Easy to install or remove 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutting may be necessary for perfect fit • Lots of joints (reduced when applying 24x24" tile) • Requires transition to floor from exposed edges
 <p>Roll material \$600–\$1,200 for 400 sq. ft.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good cushioning • Good traction • Hides cracks, blemishes • Widths: 7½–10' • Easy to install or remove 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large rolls can be unwieldy • Cutting necessary for perfect fit • Some colors may require special order

EPOXY: CUTTING THROUGH THE MARKETING HYPE

The words "two-part epoxy" encompass a lot of products for garage floors. And some terminology or marketing mumbo jumbo confuses homeowners. Our best advice: Read product online material safety data sheets (MSDS) and ask questions.

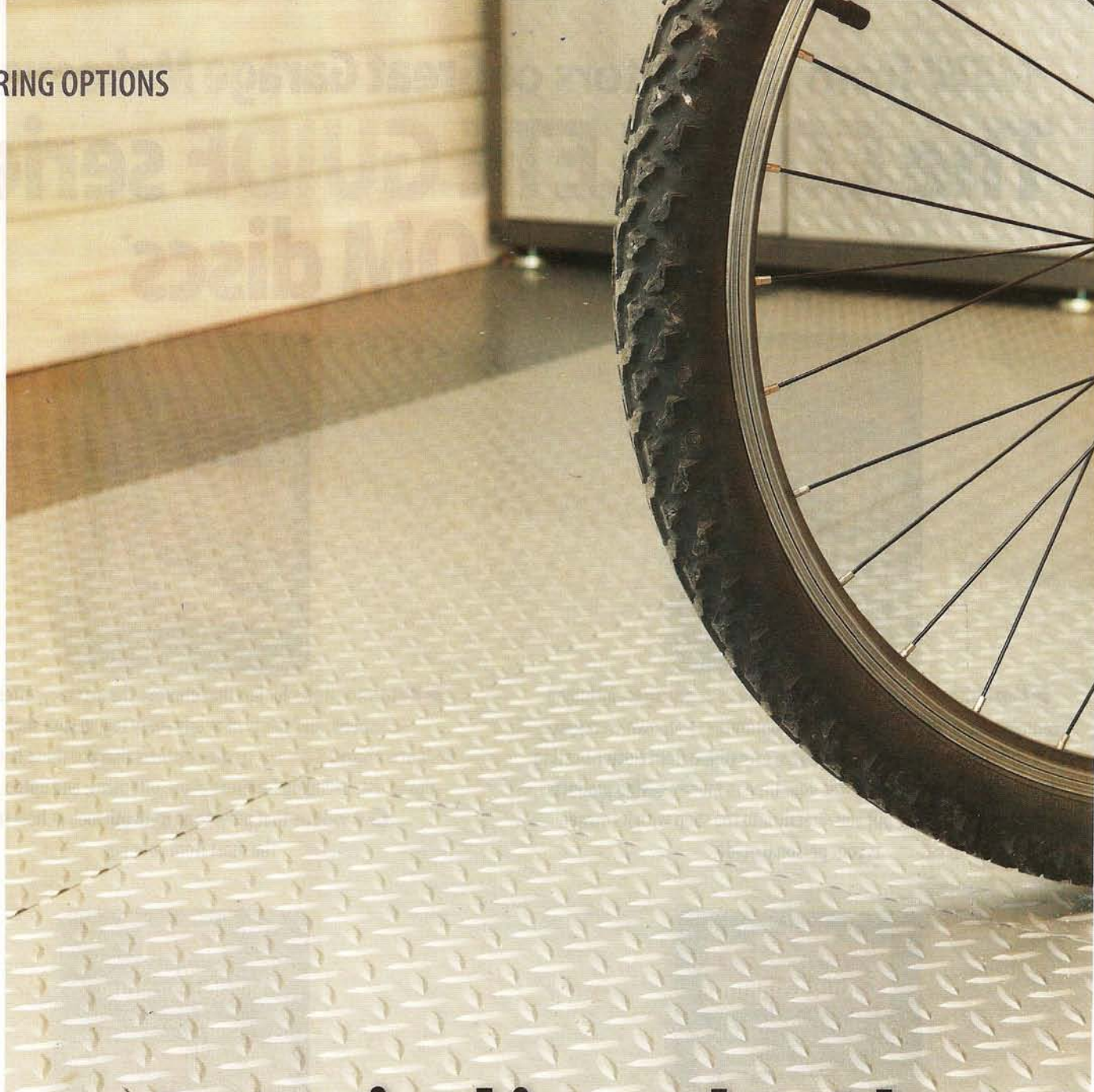
Aliphatic refers to how the resin and hardener molecules combine to become durable. There are 50 or more chemistries of aliphatic epoxies. Good quality.

Cycloaliphatic epoxies (often found in the Part B hardener) generally outperform aliphatic in UV stabilization and chemical resistance. Better quality.

Advanced Hybrid Cycloaliphatic (AHC) combines the best of specialty aliphatics and specialty cycloaliphatics; flexibility increases without compromising the durability of the cured epoxy. Best quality.

Inexpensive **fillers** like **nonyl phenol** can leach out over time. Result: The final cured layer on the floor (thickness expressed in mils) is thinner and more likely to lose flexibility over time, which leads to cracking.

BLT roll material
bltlc.com



concrete to vinyl in under 4 hours

A self-adhesive vinyl tile proved to be the easiest project in this couple's garage makeover.

Self-adhesive vinyl flooring tile for garages has been available for only a couple of years, but it's already gaining converts. The couple shown installing tile on these pages was sold on the easy, mess-free application, price (about \$3 a square foot), and good looks of the solid vinyl.

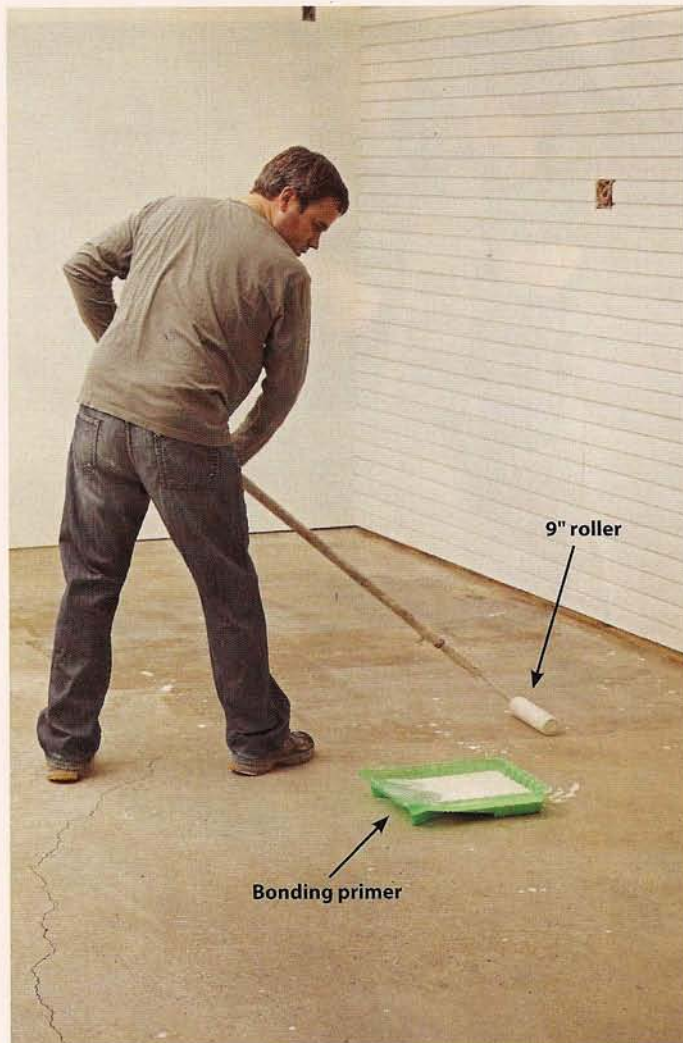
The tiles have a pressure-sensitive adhesive (formulated for garages) on their backs, so you just peel off the thin protector film and press into place. No gooeey, sticky, troweled-on adhesives or mortars necessary!

Don't overlook two more benefits. First, the 24×24" tiles go down four times as quickly as 12×12" tiles (fewer joints to match up). And if you choose a checkerboard look, the pattern of alternating colors isn't as intense as with smaller tile.

Cutting tiles proved to be the most time-consuming task. The couple realized they could have eliminated cuts on the front wall (where the garage door falls) by moving the centerline 6" toward the back.

Peel & Stick tile is available from Better Life Technology (BLTllc.com).

Snap 2 Lines and Away We Go to a New Floor



The day before laying down the tile, Zac rolls out a coat of Behr's Concrete Bonding Primer. The primer prevents the concrete from absorbing the adhesive. (See page 38 for tips on removing oil stains.)



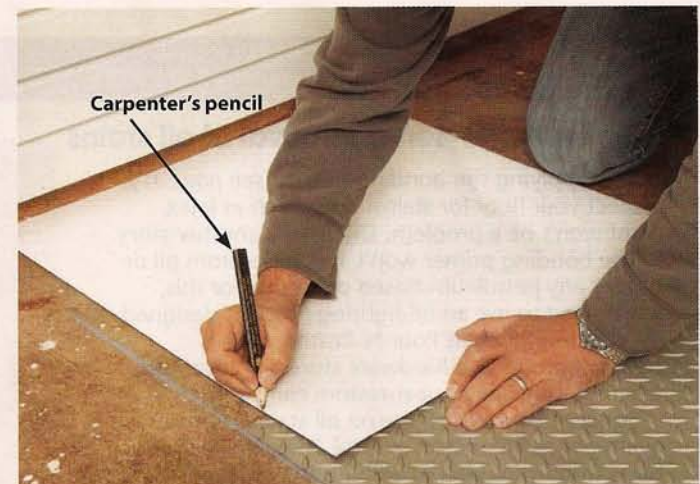
8:00am To mark the center of the floor, Zac snaps a chalk line across the length of the garage. A second chalk line (shown below) will mark the center of the other axis (side walls).



8:05am After peeling off the release paper, Sarah carefully aligns the first tile with the centerpoint and the chalk lines. (Tile can be peeled up and repositioned during this stage.)

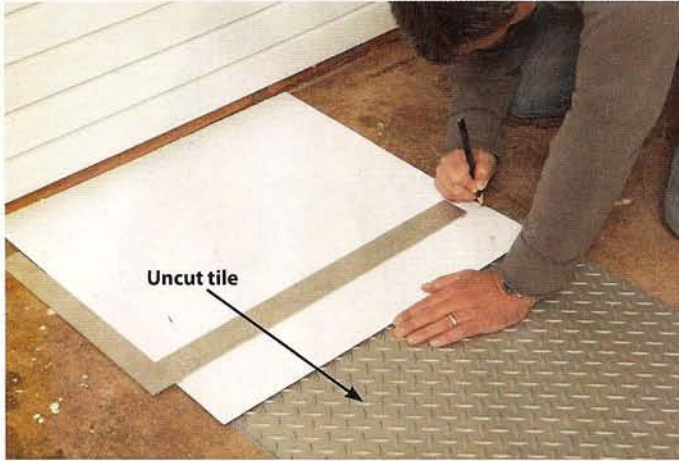


8:15am While Sarah lines up the sixth tile, Zac uses a 24" carpenter's square to check the alignment of adjacent tiles. Still square and looking good!

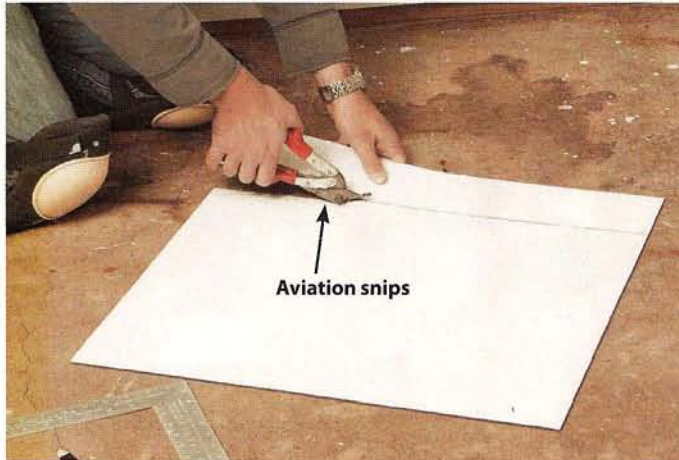


8:45am With one quadrant of 24x24" tiles in place, Zac turns a tile over to mark the cutline on the white release paper for a partial tile along a side wall.

FLOORING OPTIONS



8:46am Zac uses the carpenter's square to connect the marks. When flipped over, the cut edge will be against the wall, where it's least noticeable.



8:47am After scoring the tile twice with a utility knife, Zac uses aviation snips to finish cutting through the tile. He trimmed about 6" from each tile along the side walls.



11:00am With all the tile in place, Zac rolls the floor to remove any remaining air bubbles. The 75-pound linoleum roller rented for \$15 a day from a hardware store.

GARAGETIP

Prep work: No-scrub removal of oil stains

Before applying the bonding primer (see *page 37*), inspect your floor for stains. Spills such as latex paint won't be a problem. Oil? That's another story.

The bonding primer won't seal stains from oil or gas (or any petroleum-based product). For this, you'll need to use an oil-fighting product designed for concrete, such as Pour-N-Restore. (We purchased ours at a hardware store. For locations where to buy, see pour-n-restore.com.)

Squeeze Pour-N-Restore on oil stains and wait overnight as instructed. Presto! The gel-like product turns to powder after absorbing the oil. Broom away the residue, then roll out the bonding primer as directed. 🌱

