

Replacing an asphalt shingle

Shingles get damaged. Maybe a falling tree limb leaves a puncture, or wind rips a corner, or a careless teenager sneaking a cigarette on his parents' porch roof tears a shingle. Replacement isn't hard, but it's not exactly straightforward, either.

First, try to pick a temperate day to replace asphalt shingles. If it's too hot, you'll damage the roof just by being on it, never mind burn your hands on the hot shingles. If it's too cold, the shingles won't be flexible. They'll be hard to work with and likely to break when you try to bend them. Temperatures in the 60s are ideal. If it's going to be a hot summer day, work very early in the morning. If it's winter, wait until spring if you can. If you can't, pick a sunny afternoon and work gently.

Shingles usually are secured by a row of three or four nails placed just underneath where the upper shingle laps. These nails penetrate that shingle, and the top edge of the shingle below it, which means you have to loosen two courses of shingles above the one you're replacing for access. The underside of the bottom edges of shingles have tabs of asphalt applied at the factory. After installation, the sun heats and melts these tabs, gluing the bottom edge of each shingle to the one below—this keeps wind from getting under shingles and lifting them off the roof. Part of replacing a shingle

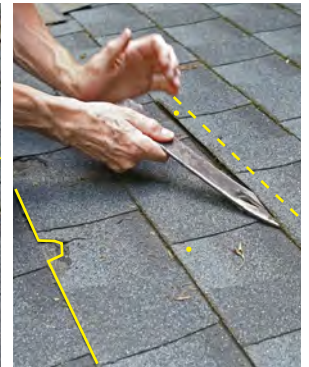
STEP BY STEP



1 Pry with care. Loosen the shingle to be replaced by sliding a flat bar between it and the shingle below, working from one side to the other. Try to avoid damaging the shingle below by cutting the asphalt tabs with the bar end rather than just prying upward.



2 Repeat the process. Next, use the pry bar to loosen the two rows of shingles above the one to be replaced. Again, focus on not damaging these shingles. To provide access for nailing, you'll need to loosen these rows at least half a shingle width to each side of the one you're replacing so they can be lifted up without breaking.



3 De-nail the top edge. The nails holding the shingle above also penetrate the bad shingle you're removing. Use your flat bar to hold the uppermost shingle out of the way, and a cat's paw to pry these nails out.



4 Pry it out. Using the flat bar, pry the bad shingle up from below. The idea is to force the shingle to tear around the nails holding it down.

5 Remove the damaged shingle. With the upper shingle nails removed and the bad shingle pried up over its main nails, it should pull out easily.

* Yellow outline indicates shingle and nail locations



is loosening these tabs and replacing them with asphalt cement.

Safe practices dictate that you be properly secured with a fall-arrest harness, or that you set up scaffolding along the edge of the roof in case of a fall. I chose to forego the usual safety equipment for this job, though, because the roof I'm working on is a very shallow, 3-in-12 pitch, one story above the ground. Under normal circumstances, though, take the time to protect yourself and your workers.

Senior editor Andy Engel is a former carpenter. Photos by Rodney Diaz.



6 Flush the existing nails. With the bad shingle out, drive the protruding nails down flush with the shingle below. They can also be pulled, but that causes more damage to the shingle below.




7 Slip in a replacement. The new shingle should slide in with little effort and no obstructions. If it gets snagged, you likely missed sinking one of the old nails.



8 Drive it home. Nail the new shingle to the roof and re-nail the upper shingle, staying an inch or so away from the existing nail holes. Follow the shingle manufacturer's instructions regarding where to nail.



9 Stick it down. The top of the new shingle will have a strip of asphalt across its centerline, so the shingle right above it will adhere. But you'll need to use a bead of roofing tar to stick the new shingle to the one below, and to adhere the uppermost shingle to the one right above the replacement.

 To see a step-by-step video on replacing asphalt shingles, visit FineHomebuilding.com/magazine.