

Drill Bit Won't Go Into Concrete — Symptom, Cause & Fix

Drill bit won't cut concrete — symptom, likely cause and fix

WHAT YOU SEE	LIKELY CAUSE	FIX
Bit spins, no rattle, little dust	Drill isn't hammering	Switch to hammer mode / hammer drill
Sharp point or twist bit	Wrong bit (wood or metal)	Use a carbide masonry bit
Was cutting, now slow; bit hot	Worn-out carbide bit	Replace the bit
Stalls deep in the hole	Hole packed with dust	Withdraw to clear; blow clean
Sudden hard stop at depth	Hit rebar or aggregate	Move the hole over to clear it
Crawls in hard / old concrete	Underpowered drill	Step up to an SDS rotary hammer
Hole cut, but anchor won't grip	Hole drilled oversize	Go up an anchor size

Most cases are the drill, not technique: concrete has to be chipped by percussive impact, so it needs a hammer drill or rotary hammer set to hammer mode. A regular drill only spins - the bit polishes the surface and makes no progress no matter how hard you lean. If the drill has no hammer mode, it is the wrong tool.

Which drill: a regular drill/driver only for occasional small holes in soft brick or block; a hammer drill is the DIY baseline for brick, block and typical anchor sizes; an SDS rotary hammer for hard concrete, bigger holes and frequent drilling. An SDS bit will not fit a standard chuck.

The bit must be carbide-tipped (ANSI B212.15) - a wood brad point or a metal twist bit cannot cut concrete. Carbide dulls with use: a worn bit rubs instead of cuts, overheats, stalls, and drills an undersized hole that ruins anchor fit. Replace it - carbide is a consumable.

Technique: steady moderate pressure (the hammer does the work; leaning on it binds and overheats the bit); withdraw periodically to clear dust and blow the hole clean. If progress stops dead at depth, you have likely hit rebar or hard aggregate - move the hole over to clear it.

Safety: drilling concrete releases respirable silica - use dust extraction and a rated respirator (not a paper mask) and eye protection. If you hit steel reinforcement or a post-tension cable, stop and reposition or get advice - do not cut structural reinforcement. Anchor and hole sizes follow the anchor's packaging; for structural or code-governed work, follow the anchor and tool manufacturers' data.