

Before repairing a crack: checklist

For cracks in block or plastered walls. Use it before patching, sealing or painting.

1. THREE QUESTIONS: IF ANY ANSWER IS "NO" OR "DON'T KNOW", DO NOT REPAIR YET

- ☐ **Is it in the finish, or in a wall with no structural signs?** If it is in a column or beam, runs diagonally across the blocks, shows on both faces, or there are leaning walls or sunken floors, ask a licensed engineer to evaluate it.
- ☐ **Is it dormant?** Cause identified and movement assessed with a comparable log (table below); a few unchanged weeks alone are not enough. If its cause is unknown, treat it as active (USACE EM 1110-2-2002, p. 2-4).
- ☐ **Has the cause been fixed?** Water, leaks, efflorescence or rust: stop the moisture first.

2. MOVEMENT LOG

DATE	LENGTH (PENCIL MARK)	CHANGED? (SAME, LONGER, WIDER)	NOTES (RAIN, TREMOR, MOISTURE)

3. METHOD BY CASE

CASE	METHOD DESCRIBED IN TECHNICAL GUIDES
Very fine, dormant hairline crack	Coating or paint that bridges that width according to its data sheet (FEMA 308, p. 25).
Dormant crack of no structural significance	USACE describes routing and sealing in concrete, with 6 mm as a desirable width. Scope and dimensions are specified for the repair (pp. 6-18 and 6-19).
Active crack	Joint with a flexible sealant and a bond breaker at the bottom. It does not restore strength (USACE, p. 6-6).
Damaged joints in exposed block	Repointing with mortar softer than the blocks, removing to about 2.5 times the joint width (FEMA 308, pp. 26-27).
Crack with structural signs	Not a patch job: diagnosis and design by a licensed engineer (FEMA 308, p. 21).

4. ASK FOR THESE IN THE WRITTEN PROPOSAL

- ☐ Cause of the crack and how it will be fixed
- ☐ Whether it is dormant or active, and based on what log
- ☐ Method and type of material (rigid or flexible)
- ☐ Product data sheet
- ☐ Preparation: removing loose material, routing, cleaning, drying
- ☐ Test area before the whole wall
- ☐ Paint system and waiting times
- ☐ Permit by scope: DOYC 2026 lists finishes and lightweight partitions; structural alterations of buildings are excluded from Visto Bueno (p. 1)
- ☐ In a condominium (PH): the façade is a common element; it goes through the administration (Ley 284, art. 16)
- ☐ If there are structural signs: a licensed professional's signed and sealed diagnosis (Ley 15, art. 4 amended by Ley 53 de 1963, art. 3)

Do not repair yet if: the crack grows, comes back after patching, runs diagonally across the blocks, is in a column or beam, or shows steel or rust. Diagnosis guides: gallardia.lat/en/guia/grietas-en-paredes-panama/ and gallardia.lat/en/guia/grieta-en-columna-o-viga-panama/.