

# EXCAVATION GLOSSARY

Common Terms You'll See in Quotes and Contracts

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Understanding excavation terminology helps you make informed decisions and communicate clearly with your contractor. Here are the most common terms you'll encounter.

## SITE WORK & PREPARATION

### **Backfill**

Material used to refill an excavated area after construction is complete. Can be the original soil or imported fill dirt.

### **Clearing**

Removing trees, brush, stumps, and vegetation from a site before excavation begins.

### **Cut**

Removing soil or rock to lower the ground level. The opposite of fill.

### **Fill**

Adding material to raise the ground level. Used to build up low areas or create proper grades.

### **Grading**

Shaping the land to create a specific slope or level surface. Essential for drainage and foundation prep.

### **Grubbing**

Removing roots, stumps, and buried organic material from below the surface after clearing.

### **Rough Grade**

Initial shaping of the land to approximate final elevations. Fine grading follows.

### **Final Grade**

Precise finishing of soil surfaces to exact specifications, typically done before landscaping or concrete work.

### **Site Prep**

All work needed to prepare land for construction, including clearing, grading, and utility installation.

## EXCAVATION TYPES

### **Basement Excavation**

Digging below ground level to create space for a basement or underground structure.

### **Bulk Excavation**

Large-scale removal of earth, typically for commercial sites or major land development.

### **Trenching**

Digging narrow, deep channels for utilities like water, sewer, electrical, or drainage lines.

### **Footing Excavation**

Precise digging for foundation footings that support building structures.

### **Pool Excavation**

Digging the hole for an in-ground swimming pool, typically requiring precise dimensions.

## MATERIALS

## **Fill Dirt**

Subsoil with minimal organic matter. Compacts well for structural support but won't support plant growth.

## **Topsoil**

Nutrient-rich surface soil with organic matter. Used for lawns, gardens, and landscaping.

## **Select Fill**

Tested, high-quality fill material that meets specific engineering requirements.

## **Spoils**

Excavated material removed from the site. May be hauled away or reused on-site.

## **Base Material**

Crushed stone or gravel used as a foundation layer under concrete, pavers, or asphalt.

## **Crusher Run**

Crushed stone mixed with stone dust that compacts tightly. Common for driveways and base layers.

# **EQUIPMENT & PROCESSES**

## **Compaction**

Mechanically compressing soil or fill material to increase density and stability.

## **Haul-Off**

Removing and transporting excavated material from the job site to a disposal location.

## **Import**

Bringing fill material, topsoil, or gravel to the job site from an outside source.

## **Benching**

Creating step-like cuts in a slope to prevent cave-ins during deep excavation.

## **Shoring**

Temporary support structures used to prevent soil collapse in deep trenches or excavations.

## **Dewatering**

Removing groundwater from an excavation site, typically with pumps.

# **MEASUREMENTS & SPECS**

## **Cubic Yard**

Standard unit for measuring excavation and fill. One cubic yard = 27 cubic feet (3ft x 3ft x 3ft).

## **Elevation**

Height of a point relative to a reference point, usually sea level or a site benchmark.

## **Grade**

The slope or angle of the ground, typically expressed as a percentage or ratio (e.g., 2% slope).

## **Setback**

Required distance between construction and property lines, easements, or other structures.

## **Swale**

A shallow channel designed to direct water drainage away from structures.

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