

MATERIAL GUIDE

Fill Dirt vs. Topsoil vs. Gravel — When to Use Each

Choosing the right material is essential for long-term results. Here's a breakdown of the most common materials and their best uses.

FILL DIRT

What it is: Subsoil with minimal organic matter. Compacts well and provides a stable base.

Best for: Raising low areas, building up grades for drainage, foundation prep, backfilling.

Not ideal for: Planting or gardening — lacks nutrients.

TOPSOIL

What it is: Nutrient-rich surface soil with organic matter. Supports plant growth.

Best for: Lawns, landscaping, garden beds, final grading before sod or seed.

Not ideal for: Structural fill or foundations — doesn't compact well.

GRAVEL

What it is: Crushed or natural stone in various sizes. Excellent drainage and stability.

Best for: Driveways, drainage systems, base material under concrete/pavers, erosion control.

Not ideal for: Areas for walking barefoot or planting.

CRUSHED STONE / DECOMPOSED GRANITE

What it is: Mechanically crushed rock with angular edges. Locks together when compacted.

Best for: Road base, driveway foundations, paver base layers, pathways, pipe bedding.

Not ideal for: Surface applications where smooth finish is needed.

QUICK REFERENCE

Material	Compaction	Drainage	Plant Growth	Cost
Fill Dirt	Excellent	Moderate	Poor	\$
Topsoil	Poor	Good	Excellent	\$\$
Gravel	Good	Excellent	None	\$\$
Crushed Stone	Excellent	Excellent	None	\$\$\$

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