



Cortex for Decking Tips

Safety Comes First

While using any tools, be sure to follow safe work practices. This includes wearing eye protection, hearing protection and gloves where appropriate. Always follow the written safety instructions of the tool manufacturer.

Before You Begin

- Cortex for Decking is designed specifically to attach composite or PVC deck boards 1 to 1 ½" thick to wood framing members only. Cortex Deck Hidden Fastening System for Steel Deck Framing will attach composite or PVC deck boards to steel framing.
- Select the correct Cortex product for the deck you are installing. The name and color of your decking should correspond to the label on the Cortex box. Substituting Cortex plugs in deck boards that "look similar" is not recommended as the long term performance of this system depends on mating the exact plug and deck material.
- Read the decking manufacturer's installation instructions before beginning your project and follow them. Pay special attention to the minimum end and edge fastener spacing requirements. If pre-drilling is required at the ends of boards, this must be followed when using the Cortex screws.
- Review the Cortex product literature, especially "Restricted Cortex Uses", before installing the product. In some cases, such as sleeper systems over flat roofs, this system may not be appropriate. Please download the Cortex for Decking Guarantee of Performance. If you have any questions after reading the deck manufacturer or Cortex instructions, please call before proceeding.
- Fastening deck boards over solid, uninterrupted wood material or on unusually rigid deck structures may require a different fastening pattern. Examples of this are fascia boards (the horizontal boards that cover the decks rim board), perimeter boards along the outside of a deck or boards that cover breaker boards that run over the top of a joist or girder. Attaching deck boards anything other than joists may require a different fastening pattern. Please call us for that information.

Installing Your Cortex Deck

- Select a high torque, contractor-grade drill to install your decking. We highly recommend a drill with a ½" chuck either corded or battery powered of at least 18 volts. Do not use any speed higher than 1800 rpm. Turn any torque setting to the infinite setting. An impact driver may also be used with Azek and Trex Escapes but is not recommended with Trex Accents, EverGrain, or TimberTech Twin-Finish decking.
- Align yourself directly above the screw and avoid tipping the drill in any direction.
- With the drill set to high speed, install the Cortex screw into the deck, allowing the screw to rotate freely on the deck surface for a few seconds before threading into the deck. Drive each screw in one continuous motion. Do not slow or stop until the setting tool has disengaged automatically from the screw.
- Install two screws per joist, making sure they are perpendicular to deck boards. If necessary sister a block of wood to the joist so the screw can be driven perpendicular.

- Place the Cortex plug into the cored-out hole and gently tap until it is flush with the deck surface.
- Periodically change a worn driver bit for a fresh bit at least every 125 screws.
- Pre drilling is required when installing screws near the ends of the board. Using a 5/32" or 3/16" bit, pre drill only the deck material (not the framing) prior to installing the screw.
- Pre drilling is usually necessary when installing decking over existing (old) framing, for boards measuring over 1 1/4" in thickness, or in cold weather installations (below 40 degrees). Use a 1/8" or 9/64" drill bit to drill through the deck board and into the joist the full length of the bit.
- If damage occurs to the screw while being driven, do not continue to drive the screw in. Back it out and install a new screw.
- If you experience a consistent problem installing the screws after applying the above recommendations, please contact FastenMaster before continuing your project. In most cases we can determine the cause and solve the issue over the phone.

Removing a Plug and Screw

- Using a trim screw (#7 or smaller), center the point in the plug you are looking to remove. Slowly install the screw until the point passes through the plug and "bottoms out" on the screw head below. Remove the plug using the screw as a handle.
- With a standard #1 square drive bit (not the setting tool), carefully engage the recess of the embedded Cortex screw. On slow speed, centering your weight over the drill, reverse the screw out of the deck.

Removing a Damaged Screw

- If the head is above the deck surface, use one of the following methods:
 - Remove the driver bit from your drill and open the chuck wide enough to capture the head of the screw. Tighten the chuck firmly around the head and set the drill in reverse and on low speed. Slowly draw the fastener out of the deck.
 - If you prefer to use Vise-Grips, grasp the screw head but be sure to protect the deck surface from tool marks by providing enough clearance between the tool and the deck's surface.
- If the head is at or slightly below the deck surface, use these methods in order:
 - Use an impact driver with a new standard #1 square drive. Set the tool on reverse, align your weight over top of the drill and slowly remove the screw.
 - Use a #2 square drive bit and drive the bit into the head of the problem screw with a few firm hits of a hammer. Using a sleeve or extension preinstalled on the drill, carefully slide the open end onto the #2 bit and on low speed reverse out the screw. Please view the video of this at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnYdhKMMMIE>

Always be careful not to damage the decking surface by masking off around the screw when necessary. We strongly recommend cleaning off any debris left behind immediately after the work is completed.

If you have any questions not answered by this document or are experiencing any problems with the Cortex system, please contact FastenMaster Technical Services.

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