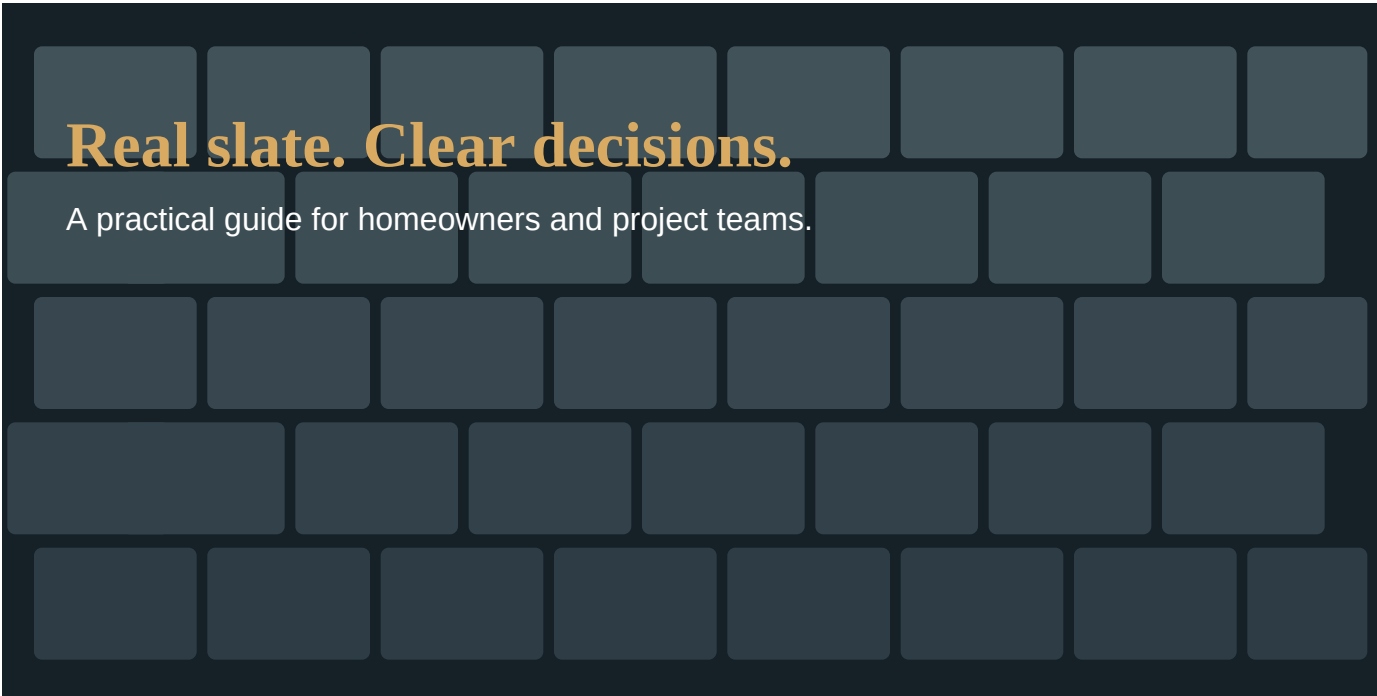


BUYING / REPAIRING / MAINTAINING

The Slate Boss Guide

To a better-informed slate roof project.



Real slate. Clear decisions.

A practical guide for homeowners and project teams.

Understand your options. Ask better questions. Prepare a useful inquiry.

Original guidance and printable worksheets from Slate Roofing USA, informed by publicly available industry references.

Presented by Tim Kelly - Slate Boss
Keeping it real.

[Start your project at SlateRoofingUSA.com/ask](https://SlateRoofingUSA.com/ask)

START HERE

How to use this guide

Begin with the decision you need to make, then take the relevant worksheet to your roofer or supplier. A useful conversation starts with your location, the work you need, and what is still unknown.

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What this guide covers

This is a homeowner planning aid, not a specification, roof survey or do-it-yourself installation manual. Roof access, structural assessment and repairs belong with qualified professionals. Observe from the ground; do not climb onto a roof to gather information for this guide.

About the references

The technical notes use the NSA Mobile Field Guide, a publicly available excerpt adapted from Joseph Jenkins' *Slate Roof Bible*, and National Park Service preservation guidance. The complete paid books were not reviewed for this edition. Source numbers point to page 15; no publisher drawings or book pages are reproduced.

This independent guide is not endorsed by the NSA or Joseph Jenkins. Product instructions, current local requirements and project-specific professional advice govern the work.

01 / CHOOSING A ROOF

Is natural slate right for your project?

Decide what you want the roof to accomplish before choosing a product. Appearance, existing building conditions, the available contractor and the complete installed budget all belong in the same conversation.

Set your priorities

- Appearance: do you want to preserve a historic roof, create a uniform finish or use a varied blend?
- Scope: is this a few replacement pieces, one slope or an entirely new roof?
- Capacity: who will confirm that the proposed roof assembly suits the building?
- Support: who can install it and maintain it in your area?
- Timing: when must materials arrive, and is that a target or a firm deadline?

Compare complete proposals

When comparing natural slate with another roof covering, request comparable scopes. Record removal, access, structural work, flashings, drainage, installation, maintenance assumptions and warranty terms. A material-only price does not answer the installed-cost question.

Your decision prompt: "What matters most to me is _____. I can be flexible about _____. Before committing, I need evidence of _____."

Avoid treating any roof covering as universally best. Choose the documented product and assembly that fit this building and your priorities.

02 / MATERIALS & SAMPLES

Choose the actual slate

A color label alone is not a material specification. Ask for the product identity, source, dimensions, thickness range and a representative sample selection. Jenkins' public installation guidance emphasizes evaluating slate selection beyond price and color. [2]

Ask the supplier	Record the answer
What is the product and quarry/source?	Use the same identity on the quote and order.
What sizes and thicknesses are supplied?	Clarify ranges and allowable variation.
What appearance should I expect?	Ask about fresh and weathered examples.
Which reports apply to this product?	Check identity and date on the documents.
Can I review samples before ordering?	Confirm availability, charges and shipping.

Make sample review useful

Label each sample and photograph it in consistent light. Compare several pieces if possible. Keep a record of the agreed selection and ask how the delivered material will relate to it. A photograph or a single sample cannot show every variation in an order.

Ask about stock, production and freight separately. An item described as available may still require sorting, preparation or transport. Obtain a written delivery estimate.

03 / EXISTING ROOFS

Repair or replace? Start with evidence.

An old slate roof does not automatically need replacement. Localized damage, metal failures and broader material deterioration require different responses. NPS guidance recommends assessing each roof individually and considering repair before replacing historic slate. [3]

Request an assessment that separates the causes

- Which areas have damaged or missing slate? Ask for locations and photographs.
- Is the problem in the stone, fasteners, flashings, drainage, deck or another component?
- What evidence supports the proposed cause of leakage?
- Can a local repair address it, and what would remain unresolved?
- If replacement is proposed, what repair or partial-replacement alternatives were considered?

Compare options in writing

Ask for the recommended scope, its limitations, expected follow-up and what might change once work begins. If recommendations differ substantially, consider an independent slate specialist or building professional before committing.

NPS cautions that smearing mastic or sealant onto damaged slates is not a durable substitute for appropriate slate repair. Ask whether any emergency measure is temporary and when the permanent repair will follow. [3]

Do not use a percentage, roof age or photograph alone as a universal replacement rule.

04 / THE ROOF AS A SYSTEM

Think beyond the visible stone

A proposal should explain how the roof covering works with the building. You do not need to design the details yourself, but you should know who is responsible for them.

Part of the project	Question to take to your team
Structure and deck	Who confirms capacity, deck condition and required repairs?
Slate layout	How will the layout suit the slope, slate dimensions and pattern?
Fastening	What fasteners are specified for this material and assembly?
Underlayment	What system is specified, and how is compatibility confirmed?
Flashings and drainage	Which valleys, chimney details, gutters and transitions are included?
Roof access and snow	What access protection or snow management does this building need?

The NSA explains that headlap and exposure are related: the visible portion changes with slate length and overlap. Those terms help you understand a proposal; they do not replace the project's required layout. [1]

Jenkins' public excerpt emphasizes planning the details and avoiding damage from walking on slate. Ask the installer to explain the access plan. Do not use this guide to choose fastening, overlap or deck specifications. [2]

05 / REPAIR MATERIALS

Match the slate you already have

Matching involves more than a similar color. The NSA identifies type, dimensions, texture, shape and weathering characteristics as relevant when selecting replacement slate. [1]

Prepare a simple matching brief

- Project city, state and ZIP code.
- Approximate quantity and desired timing.
- Roof age, known product information and previous repair records.
- Ground-level photographs of the overall roof and the repair area.
- Photos of the face, back and edge of an existing loose spare piece, if available.
- Length, width and thickness measured from a safely accessible spare, if known.

Mark unknown details as unknown

Do not guess a quarry or product name from a photograph. Ask a qualified roofer to obtain a sample or roof measurements when access is necessary. Let the supplier know whether you have new attic stock, weathered material or only images.

Request a physical comparison before ordering a large quantity. Ask which features are close, which differ and whether the roofer considers the proposed replacement suitable for the existing roof.

Start a slate-matching inquiry

Keep the project name consistent when sending photos separately so the images can be matched to your form submission.

06 / CONTRACTOR CONVERSATIONS

Choose the people doing the work

Use the same questions with each candidate. A general roofing sales presentation is not enough to understand who will carry out your particular slate project.

- Can you show comparable natural-slate projects and explain your role on them?
- Who will supervise, and who will perform the slate and metal work?
- Can I speak with customers whose project scope resembles mine?
- What insurance and licensing documentation applies to this job?
- How will you protect the slate, landscaping, entrances and occupied rooms?
- How will the roof be protected if weather interrupts the work?
- How will concealed damage and changes to the scope be priced and approved?
- What photographs and completion records will I receive?

Write down the answers

Compare the proposed crew and scope, not only company names. If subcontractors are involved, ask who coordinates them and who is responsible for the finished work. Record who handles service calls after completion.

A directory listing is a starting point for your own checks. Confirm qualifications, references, insurance and project fit before hiring. A listing alone is not a warranty of workmanship.

[Find a slate roofer or request help](#)

07 / BUDGET & SCOPE

Compare quotes on equal terms

Send the same brief to every bidder. Ask each to identify allowances, exclusions and unresolved items so a low total does not hide a different scope.

Compare	What should be written down
Material	Product, source, size, thickness, quantity and selection process.
Work included	Removal, deck repairs, slate work, flashings and drainage.
Access and protection	Scaffolding or lifts, temporary weather protection and site protection.
Delivery	Freight, unloading, access restrictions and storage responsibilities.
Uncertainty	Allowances, change approval and treatment of concealed damage.
Completion	Schedule assumptions, cleanup, spare slate and records.
Terms	Payment milestones, warranty scope and exclusions.

Ask the comparison question

"If I choose this proposal, what work or material might still be needed but is not included in your price?" Record the answer beside the total. Compare what each warranty actually covers; a duration alone is not a complete description.

08 / MAINTENANCE & REUSE

Care for the roof you own

Keep a roof file with photographs, product information, invoices and repair records. NPS recommends regular observation, attention after severe storms and prompt repair of damaged slate by experienced workers. [3]

Observe safely

From the ground, note visible changes and where they occur. Record interior moisture signs only where you can safely access the space. Report concerns to your roofer; a ground view cannot establish the condition of every slate or flashing.

- Ask your roofer for a maintenance schedule suited to the property.
- Arrange qualified help for gutter work and roof access.
- Give other trades the roof-access requirements before they arrive.
- Keep labeled spare material in an appropriate storage location agreed with your supplier.

Ask about salvage before disposal

Discuss whether removed slate can be evaluated for reuse. Ask who will sort it, what condition criteria apply and where usable pieces will go. NPS notes that sound salvaged material can sometimes support later repairs. [3]

For environmental comparisons, request product-specific evidence and include transport, maintenance and replacement assumptions. Avoid calling any product "zero impact" or assuming every reclaimed piece is suitable for another roof.

PRINTABLE WORKSHEET / 1

Your project brief

Complete what you know. Leave uncertain details for the roofer or supplier to confirm.

Name and preferred contact

Project city, state / ZIP

Work needed: new roof, repair, replacement, matching or materials

Known roof size or slate quantity - and who measured it

Preferred material / appearance, or existing roof information

Timing, site access and the main question you need answered

PRINTABLE WORKSHEET / 2

Proposal comparison sheet

Copy this page for each proposal. Attach the full quote; use the notes to identify missing information.

Company / contact / proposal date

Check	Included, excluded or needs clarification?
Slate product and quantity	
Deck and structural scope	
Flashings and drainage	
Access, delivery and protection	
Schedule, cleanup and records	
Warranty and payment milestones	

Total / allowances / next question

Roof record & maintenance log

Keep observations separate from a professional diagnosis. Add dated photographs and invoices to your roof file.

Property / roof area / known material

Date	Observation or work	Who checked / next action

Next planned review / contractor contact

Observe from the ground. Do not climb onto the roof or remove slate to complete this record.

QUICK REFERENCE

Useful words for the conversation

Term	Plain-language meaning
Square	100 square feet of roof area. Confirm how quantities and coverage are stated.
Course	A horizontal row of slates.
Exposure	The visible height of a slate after the next course overlaps it. [1]
Headlap	Overlap measured between a slate and the course two rows above it. [1]
Flashing	Material used to manage water at joints, transitions and penetrations.
Valley	The inward junction where two roof slopes meet.
Ridge / hip	The top meeting line / outward sloping meeting line of roof planes.
Deck / sheathing	The supporting surface beneath the roof covering.
Submittal	Product information or details sent for review before use.
Allowance	A stated amount set aside in a proposal for an item not fully determined.

Definitions help you ask questions. They do not establish dimensions, code compliance, product suitability or the final installation design.

SOURCE NOTES

References & further reading

References were checked on October 3, 2026. Historical guidance can contain dated practices, availability and code references. Confirm current requirements for the actual project.

[1] National Slate Association

NSA Mobile Field Guide. Public reference derived from *Slate Roofs: Design and Installation Manual*. Used for limited terminology and material-matching notes in this guide. The complete paid manual was not reviewed.

[Read the NSA Mobile Field Guide](#)

[Purchase the complete NSA manual](#)

[2] Joseph Jenkins / Slate Roof Bible resources

Basic Slate Roof Installation, public PDF described as adapted and excerpted from the *Slate Roof Bible*; and *Installing a Traditional Slate Roof*, public web guidance. Used for limited selection and access-planning principles. The complete third-edition book was not reviewed.

[Read the public installation excerpt](#)

[Read Jenkins' public installation guidance](#)

[Purchase The Slate Roof Bible e-book](#)

[3] National Park Service

Jeffrey S. Levine, *Preservation Brief 29: The Repair, Replacement, and Maintenance of Historic Slate Roofs* (1992). Used for limited preservation, repair and maintenance principles.

[Read Preservation Brief 29](#)

YOUR NEXT STEP

Turn your questions into a project

You do not need every measurement or product detail before asking for help. Start with the information you have, identify what is unknown and tell us where the project is located.

Buy slate or request pricing

Share the project location, material preferences, quantity if known and desired delivery timing.

[Send a materials inquiry](#)

Match existing slate

Use the matching brief on page 7. Include safe photographs and any known dimensions or product history.

[Start a matching inquiry](#)

Find a roofer, samples or documents

[Request a slate roofer](#)

[Ask about samples](#)

[Request technical documents](#)

Sample availability, pricing, freight and service coverage require individual confirmation. An inquiry is not an order. The form sends project details to Slate Roofing USA; photos can be emailed separately as described on the site.

Slate Boss / Slate Roofing USA

Keeping it real.

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