

Description

Image



Caption

1. Close-up of the material. © Granta Design 2. The proportions and regularity of brick make it fast to assemble. Brick weathers well, and the texture and color make it visually attractive. © Granta Design

The material

Brick is as old as Babylon (4000 BC) and as durable. It is the most ancient of all man-made building materials. The regularity and proportions of bricks makes them easy to lay in a variety of patterns, and their durability makes them an ideal material for the construction of building. Clay - the raw material from which bricks are made - is available almost everywhere; finding the energy to fire them can be more of a problem. Pure clay is gray-white in color; the red color of most bricks comes from impurities of iron oxide.

General properties

Density	1.6e3	-	2.1e3	kg/m ³
Price	* 0.62	-	1.66	USD/kg
Date first used	-7500			

Mechanical properties

Young's modulus	15	-	30	GPa
Shear modulus	6	-	12.5	GPa
Bulk modulus	* 8	-	17	GPa
Poisson's ratio	0.2	-	0.25	
Yield strength (elastic limit)	5	-	14	MPa
Tensile strength	5	-	14	MPa
Compressive strength	10	-	70	MPa
Elongation	0			% strain
Hardness - Vickers	20	-	35	HV
Fatigue strength at 10 ⁷ cycles	* 6	-	9	MPa
Fracture toughness	1	-	2	MPa.m ^{0.5}
Mechanical loss coefficient (tan delta)	* 0.004	-	0.02	

Thermal properties

Melting point	927	-	1.23e3	°C
Maximum service temperature	927	-	1.23e3	°C
Minimum service temperature	-273			°C
Thermal conductor or insulator?	Poor insulator			
Thermal conductivity	0.46	-	0.73	W/m.°C
Specific heat capacity	750	-	850	J/kg.°C
Thermal expansion coefficient	5	-	8	μstrain/°C

Electrical properties

Electrical conductor or insulator?	Good insulator			
Electrical resistivity	1e14	-	3e16	μohm.cm
Dielectric constant (relative permittivity)	7	-	10	
Dissipation factor (dielectric loss tangent)	0.001	-	0.01	
Dielectric strength (dielectric breakdown)	9	-	15	1000000 V/m

Optical properties

Transparency	Opaque			
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Processability

Moldability	2	-	4	
Machinability	1	-	2	

Durability: water and aqueous solutions

Water (fresh)	Excellent
Water (salt)	Excellent
Soils, acidic (peat)	Excellent
Soils, alkaline (clay)	Excellent
Wine	Excellent

Durability: acids

Acetic acid (10%)	Excellent
Acetic acid (glacial)	Excellent
Citric acid (10%)	Excellent
Hydrochloric acid (10%)	Excellent
Hydrochloric acid (36%)	Excellent
Hydrofluoric acid (40%)	Unacceptable
Nitric acid (10%)	Excellent
Nitric acid (70%)	Excellent
Phosphoric acid (10%)	Excellent
Phosphoric acid (85%)	Excellent

Sulfuric acid (10%)	Excellent
Sulfuric acid (70%)	Excellent

Durability: alkalis

Sodium hydroxide (10%)	Excellent
Sodium hydroxide (60%)	Excellent

Durability: fuels, oils and solvents

Amyl acetate	Excellent
Benzene	Excellent
Carbon tetrachloride	Excellent
Chloroform	Excellent
Crude oil	Excellent
Diesel oil	Excellent
Lubricating oil	Excellent
Paraffin oil (kerosene)	Excellent
Petrol (gasoline)	Excellent
Silicone fluids	Excellent
Toluene	Excellent
Turpentine	Excellent
Vegetable oils (general)	Excellent
White spirit	Excellent

Durability: alcohols, aldehydes, ketones

Acetaldehyde	Excellent
Acetone	Excellent
Ethyl alcohol (ethanol)	Excellent
Ethylene glycol	Excellent
Formaldehyde (40%)	Excellent
Glycerol	Excellent
Methyl alcohol (methanol)	Excellent

Durability: halogens and gases

Chlorine gas (dry)	Excellent
Fluorine (gas)	Limited use
O ₂ (oxygen gas)	Excellent
Sulfur dioxide (gas)	Excellent

Durability: built environments

Industrial atmosphere	Acceptable
Rural atmosphere	Excellent

Marine atmosphere	Excellent
UV radiation (sunlight)	Excellent

Durability: flammability

Flammability	Non-flammable
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Durability: thermal environments

Tolerance to cryogenic temperatures	Excellent
Tolerance up to 150 C (302 F)	Excellent
Tolerance up to 250 C (482 F)	Excellent
Tolerance up to 450 C (842 F)	Excellent
Tolerance up to 850 C (1562 F)	Excellent
Tolerance above 850 C (1562 F)	Excellent

Geo-economic data for principal component

Annual world production, principal component	* 5e7	-	5.1e7	tonne/yr
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Primary material production: energy, CO2 and water

Embodied energy, primary production	2.2	-	5	MJ/kg
CO2 footprint, primary production	0.206	-	0.227	kg/kg
Water usage	* 5.27	-	5.83	l/kg
Eco-indicator 95	28			millipoints/kg
Eco-indicator 99	11			millipoints/kg

Material processing: energy

Grinding energy (per unit wt removed)	* 9.7	-	10.7	MJ/kg
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Material processing: CO2 footprint

Grinding CO2 (per unit wt removed)	* 0.727	-	0.804	kg/kg
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Material recycling: energy, CO2 and recycle fraction

Recycle	✗			
Recycle fraction in current supply	15	-	20	%
Downcycle	✓			
Combust for energy recovery	✗			
Landfill	✓			
Biodegrade	✗			
Toxicity rating	Non-toxic			
A renewable resource?	✗			

Environmental notes

Brick is used on a vast scale. The long firing time, extending to some days, involves a considerable consumption of energy, but otherwise the process of making brick is not a damaging one. In use, brick is inert and - particularly if glazed - resists weathering, giving an extremely long life, and they can be reused when a building is demolished.

Supporting information

Design guidelines

Bricks and the mortar used to bond them are strong in compression but weak in tension. This largely determines the way they are used: brick structures (like those of stone) are designed in such a way that the loads are compressive everywhere, ruling out cantilevered or very slender forms. The face of brick can be molded and glazed, allowing great freedom of decoration, and the pattern and natural color variation gives a visually attractive surface. Low-fired, unglazed brick is vulnerable to water-penetration and degradation, and should be screened from direct weathering. High-fired or glazed brick is extremely durable.

Technical notes

Brick is fired clay: hydrous aluminum silicate, with impurities of potash, soda, lime, and oxides of iron. On heating to 900-1200C, the aluminum silicate reacts with soda to form a viscous glass - it is this that bonds the brick together. Most brick is porous; if it is to resist water it is glazed. To do this the surface of the fired brick is painted with a mixture of glass-forming fluxes and the brick is re-fired, melting the glaze, and forming a glassy surface that can be colored.

Typical uses

Domestic and industrial building, walls, paths and roads.

Links

Reference

ProcessUniverse

Producers