McLAREN
Manufacturer of Tracks and Tires

How to Pick the Right Mini Excavator Tracks



Mini excavators require a sturdy set of tracks to get the job done. But not every situation uses the same set of rubber treads. When equipping your excavator, select the tracks that will offer the right fit and best performance for what you need to do. This guide makes it easy when you need to know how to pick the right tracks for your mini excavator.

Importance of Mini Excavators on the Jobsite

Despite their size, mini excavators are workhorses, not toys. These machines may be small, but they prove their mettle on the jobsite. Their compact size allows them better maneuverability around a construction site. Mini excavators can fit in spaces full-sized vehicles would not. The smaller size becomes an advantage when you need power in tight spaces.

Many people prefer this model for their lower cost, smaller size and better versatility compared to larger models. Unlike full-sized excavators, mini models usually have simplified features, which makes choosing the right excavator for the job much easier.

The versatility of mini excavators makes them an invaluable addition to any worksite. Thanks to the variety of attachments available, these machines can do a myriad of tasks. From digging small sewer lines to demolishing tiny structures, mini excavators do the functions that larger models would be too powerful to accomplish.

Another benefit of mini excavators is their lighter weight. Because they don't weigh as much as full-sized excavators, the mini models put less pressure on the ground. The result is shallower tread tracks and less damage to the landscape. However, how much the tread affects the grass depends on the track pattern. The tracks on the excavator are also an integral part of the machine's design. And you need to select the design, compound and materials for the tread to best suit your job.

Different Track Pattern Designs

Track pattern designs determine the performance level of your excavator, especially on specific terrains. With better performance and increased longevity, you will get your projects done faster. The key to reaping these benefits comes from selecting the right track pattern.

Track patterns vary in their designs. You need to choose the pattern that best adapts to the terrain you're using the mini excavator on. With the right track patterns, you'll reduce the impact on the environment while getting the job done. Just by changing the tracks on your mini excavator, you'll adapt it to new terrain. You can use the same excavator in more places, which saves you money and makes your investment in different track patterns more than worth the cost.

Part of knowing how to pick the right compact excavator tracks requires knowing about available patterns. The pattern designs vary by manufacturer. Be sure to check with the maker of your tread to see the possible lineup of designs. These designs optimize the track for use on a variety of terrains.

- **Turf:** The turf pattern reduces the impact on lawns of the excavator's treads. This pattern best suits vehicles used 80 percent of the time or more on grass.
- **TDF super:** For traction on snow or wet surfaces, the TDF super track is an ideal solution to keep working in inclement conditions.
- **Zig-zag:** If you must move your excavator over mud, you'll need the added traction of the zig-zag pattern. However, do not use this in dry, rocky conditions, as the tread may wear out prematurely.
- **Terrapin:** The terrapin track covers all terrains, from rocks or gravel to lawns or mud. With a distinct design, the terrapin pattern merges a smooth ride with superior traction. This pattern makes an ideal general-use, all-purpose tread for mini excavators that serve multiple tasks on a jobsite.
- **C-pattern:** The c-shape tread often comes as a standard OEM tread on some mini excavators.
- **Block pattern:** Simple yet efficient, the block design appears on many excavator treads as the standard pattern.
- **Steel tracks:** Though steel tracks are not a specific pattern, HYBRID models come with detachable rubber pads. Removing the pads turns the tracks into steel workhorses that can tackle the toughest terrain without damage rubber treads would incur.

The above represent just some of the many patterns available. Thanks to the multitude of designs, you can use your mini excavator in any terrain. Removing the chance of bad weather ruining your ability to drive an excavator cuts your job's downtime, helping you to finish the project on time.

Different Track Compound Options

Manufacturers use different compounds to give their tracks properties you cannot get elsewhere. Depending on your budget and what you need the excavator to do, you have several track material options, including rubber with steel belts and hybrid tracks.

Importance of Rubber

For mini excavators, the most critical part of the track composition is the quality of the rubber. You don't want rubber breaking down from exposure to the elements, especially repeated high-intensity sun exposure. The quality of the rubber can determine how long your new tracks will last. While treads that use high-quality rubber may have a slightly higher price, they will quickly pay for themselves in the extended use you get from them.

All rubber does not have the same properties, however. That's why companies that create quality tracks use diverse types of rubber on various parts of the treads. For instance, hard rubber on the exterior stands up to the rigors of use, but softer rubber on the inside, against the undercarriage, allows for greater flexibility of the tracks.

Steel Belts

Inside the rubber tracks, a steel belt reinforces the design. Some manufacturers use a continuous wound cable, whereas others overlap cable ends. Continuous wound cables better suit applications that put more torque on the treads. Mini excavators do not strain their tracks as much, and the steel cable design has reduced importance. However, a continuous belt offers more durability compared to overlapping steel belts.

Combining the steel belt inside the track and the exterior, HYBRID models provide you with a rugged, long-lasting tread for any terrain. The steel design includes replaceable rubber pads on the outside. If you need treads

for the toughest jobs on rough terrain, select this design, which becomes almost indestructible when used without the rubber pads.

Sizing the Tracks

One critical part of choosing the best mini excavator tracks is knowing the size you need. The size you select for your treads is vital to their operation. If your treads are too small for your excavator, they'll wear out prematurely, and if they are too large, they won't fit correctly. Look at the rubber tread you already have on the excavator. The sizing information should on the inside of the track.

For help with finding your track size, contact your replacement track manufacturer. Because such companies deal with replacing tracks on construction equipment on a daily basis, the professionals on staff can help you determine the track size your compact excavator needs.

Matching Your Mini Excavator Tracks to Your Industry and Terrain

The tracks you select depends on the terrain you cover. In some cases, you may need different sets of treads to continue using your mini excavator all year long, through snowy conditions and dry weather. Here are some types of tracks specific industries may require:

- **Landscaping:** Smooth surface tracks are ideal for gardening. These tracks create the least impact on the ground, protecting the grass from damage while allowing you to move your mini excavator into place.
- **Demolition:** Because many demolition sites have extreme conditions and require the vehicle to have better traction, steel tracks are an ideal choice. The steel lasts longer and grips the ground better in any circumstances.
- **Construction:** For moving through a construction site, you may require the durability of steel tracks.
- **Homeowners:** Mini excavators fit into the budgets of some homeowners who may require the equipment for major renovation projects. As with landscaping, tracks that leave no marks on the lawn is a critical component of operating the machine without marring your home's yard.
- **Rental companies:** Companies that rent out mini excavators provide their machines to people who do not use the excavators as much as owner-operators. More economically priced tracks may suffice to balance cost and durability for these applications. Compared to OEM tracks, McLaren's Maximizer rubber tracks have 30 percent more rubber for longer life without breaking the budget.

Increasing the Lifespan of Your Rubber Tracks

Make your investment in new tracks worth the expense by taking measures to ensure their longevity. Regular maintenance can help protect your treads from premature damage that could cut the years of use you get from them. Be sure to follow these necessary maintenance steps to preserve your new treads. You could get up to 1,600 operating hours from your treads if you do these things.

- **Keep tracks clean:** Clean off the tracks after each use. Doing so will prevent a build up of dirt and debris that can cause damage. After each use, carefully check the undercarriage for debris that could cut into the inside of the tracks.
- **Maintain tension:** Check the tension on the tracks daily. If the treads become too loose or too tight, they will wear out more quickly than if used with the correct tension.
- **Use the excavator properly:** Know how to drive the excavator correctly to prevent wearing the tracks. Don't make tight turns or turn too quickly. These maneuvers can wear out the treads just as similar moves can prematurely wear out the tires on your car. Three-point turns on asphalt and concrete will help the tracks last longer.
- **Look for quality tracks:** Some tracks have features that prevent small problems from expanding. For instance, our NextGen tracks have a crack and quarantine system. This system isolates cracks in the rubber, preventing them from growing and ruining the entire tread. Other track features that may increase life span include high-quality components and the right tread patterns for your use.

Why Choosing the Best Mini Excavator Tracks Makes a Difference

Having the right tracks for your mini excavator offers you several advantages. With better treads, you'll have less downtime on the job. Because you won't need as much time to maintain your treads, you'll be able to finish your projects on time and achieve higher productivity while working.

Selecting the right tracks makes a tremendous difference in the performance and longevity of your mini excavator. To get the most out of your new treads, also consider the undercarriage. As you use your excavator, the sprockets will change their pitch. The changing angle can affect the tension of the tread and its lifespan. Replacing the undercarriage can solve problems with using new tracks on old sprockets. Compared to replacement tracks on existing undercarriages, those used over new undercarriages last between 16 and 20 percent longer. Longer lasting treads increase the return on your investment in the new tracks and undercarriage.

With the right tracks, your excavator will perform better. Depending on what you need, you may cut down on the damage the machine does to the landscape or get better traction in snow and ice. With durable tracks, you won't have to worry about sudden breakdowns stopping work or snow preventing you from continuing your tasks.

While your mini excavator has a myriad of uses around your jobsite, its usefulness only lasts as long as its tracks. Quality tracks ensure you keep your productivity level high. As with most things in life, you get what you pay for with rubber replacement tracks. Don't go with the cheapest option, or you'll have to replace them more often and possibly experience severe damage from typical use. Go with premium replacement tracks for a better return on your investment.

Get the Right Tracks for Your Mini Excavator

Now you know how to pick the right tracks for your mini excavator, you need to get started on improving the performance of your jobsite

equipment. If you want better digging and pushing power and a smoother ride, check out our rubber tracks for mini excavators. We have options for every situation and budget. You'll find the treads your compact excavator needs.

When choosing your tracks, you'll need to make multiple decisions concerning the size, tread design and components. Your combination of choices will dictate the final price. If you have a specific budget, let us know, and we can help you find a quality track for your job at an economical cost. Should you require the most robust, longest lasting premium tracks, we can help you get those, too. Our replacement rubber tracks for mini excavators fit most popular brands and have designs to outperform OEM tracks. With high-quality tracks, you'll get a significant return on your investment in reduced downtime and longer part life.

With 25 years of experience building rubber tracks at McLaren, we have the knowledge and skills needed to help you maximize your machine. Find more information on the parts you need from our catalog or our rubber tracks for mini excavators page. If you still have questions about our products or want to request a quote, fill out our online form or phone us at (800) 836-0040.