

Care and Maintenance of Ceramic, Porcelain & Natural Stone Tile



- HANDY GUIDE TO EASY TILE CARE
- DO'S AND DON'T'S OF CERAMIC TILE CARE
- CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF TILE GROUT
- A WORD ABOUT CLEANERS
- STAIN REMOVAL GUIDE
- ROUTINE CARE GUIDE - CERAMIC TILE
- ROUTINE CARE GUIDE - NATURAL STONE

Handy Guide to Easy Tile Care

Type of Tile/Usage	Routine Cleaning	Heavy Duty Cleaning
Glazed walls/countertops	Wipe with damp cloth or sponge using all-purpose cleaner. Use window cleaner for glossy surfaces. Wipe dry with cloth	Clean with scouring powder, commercial tile cleaner, or all-purpose cleaner using non-metallic scouring pad or very fine grade stainless steel pad. Rinse and wipe dry.
Glazed Tile Floors	Vacuum regularly to remove gritty particles. Damp mop using solution of water and "soapless" detergent.	Use a commercial tile cleaner or a strong solution of water and "soapless" detergent. If stained, use scouring powder paste. Let stand for five minutes, brush and scrub. Rinse and dry. For large areas and for areas that are difficult to clean, a power scrubber is recommended.
Glazed Tile Showers	Use all-purpose or bathroom cleaner. Allow to stand for five minutes rinse and dry. May also use a mixture of equal parts water and white vinegar or a commercial tile cleaner.	Use Chlorine bleach or hydrogen peroxide(1) For stubborn stains, use scouring powder containing a bleaching agent. Let stand four to six minutes, then scrub and rinse thoroughly. To remove mildew, use a commercial tile cleaner, chlorine bleach or ammonia (1) DO NOT MIX.
Unglazed Tile Walls	Sponge with a diluted solution of water and "soapless" detergent.	Use scouring powder paste. Let stand for five minutes, then scour with brush. Rinse and wipe dry.
Unglazed Tile Floors	Vacuum regularly to remove gritty particles. Damp mop or sponge with water an/or a diluted sponge of water and "soapless" detergent.	Use scouring powder paste. Let stand for five minutes, then scour with brush. Rinse and wipe dry. A small brush is suitable for small floors; consider a scrubbing machine for larger areas.
Natural Porcelain/Semi-Polished Porcelain	Vacuum regularly to remove gritty particles. Damp mop using a solution of water and "soapless" detergent, rinse and then wipe dry.	Use scouring powder paste. Let stand for five minutes, then scour with brush. Rinse and wipe dry. A small brush is suitable for small floors; consider a scrubbing machine for large areas.

Commercial Applications	For smaller commercial areas, vacuum regularly to remove gritty particles. Using a “soapless detergent”, scrub with an inexpensive nylon brush (such as a “Doodle Bug”) . Follow by using a dry/wet vac to remove water and soap residue.	
Note:	After initial cleaning, replace nylon brush, as it becomes worn. A clean scrubber makes for a clean floor. For large commercial settings, consider the use of a commercial floor scrubbing machine.	

With colored grout, test a small inconspicuous area first or follow grout manufacturer’s instructions.

A note on Semi-Polished Porcelaine: Porcelain tile is virtually impervious to stains and wear. However, the polishing process opens microscopic pores in the surface of the tile. Therefore, it is recommended that a penetrating sealer, such as Agua Mix “Penetrating Sealer, “Sealer’s Choice, etc., be used 2 ours prior to grouting. Penetrating sealers need only be applied once, following the manufacturers instructions.

Remember, prompt clean-up of spills and regular cleaning will keep your ceramic tile surfaces looking their best.

DO’S AND DON’TS OF CERAMIC TILE CARE

DO test scouring pads in a small area first.

DO use a silicone sealer on grout joints if continuous staining is a problem.

DO read and follow label directions for all cleaning.

DO keep this information and refer to it when necessary.

DO NOT combine ammonia and household bleaches.

DO NOT use harsh cleaning agents such as steel wool pads which can scratch or damage the surface of your tile.

CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF TILE GROUT

Grout may present a special cleaning problem because it is susceptible to many staining agents. Apply a silicone sealer to grout joints several times a year for maximum protection. In addition to keeping the grout clean, be sure to keep grout joints in good repair. Scrape out loose, cracked or powdery joints and refill with good grout. One common grouting trouble sot is the joint between the tub and the wall in your bathroom. As the house or tub settles, the grout may crack and crumble. It’s relatively simple to remedy. Remove the old grout with a sharp

ointed tool, watching out that you don't scratch tile or tub. Then dry the joint thoroughly and fill with a flexible caulking compound, such as silicone rubber caulking.

A WORD ABOUT CLEANERS

There are many excellent household cleaners on the market today. They should all do a good job for you, so use your favorite. Remember, read and follow the manufacturers instructions and recommended usage. They will perform as promised, if you use them as directed.

All Purpose Cleaners:

Soft Scrub, Scrub Free, Mr. Clean, Top Job, Fantastik, Ajax liquid, Liquid Comet and Dow Bathroom cleaner.

Soapless detergents – Spic & Span and Formula 409.

Scouring powders – Comet, BonAmi, Ajax.

Nylon scouring pads – Scotch Brite - Steel wool is not recommended.

Commercial cleaners such as Aqua Mix are suitable for heavy duty cleaning in commercial applications.

STAIN REMOVAL GUIDE

STAIN	REMOVAL AGENT
Grease and fats	Soda and water or commercial spot filler
Inks and colored dyes	Household bleach
Blood	Hydrogen Peroxide or Household bleach
Coffee, tea, food, fruit, lipstick, juices	Neutral cleaner in hot water followed by hydrogen peroxide or household bleach
Caution: Vinegar may damage some tile glazes. Be sure to test this solution first in a small area to see if it etches the tile or erodes the grout.	

Ceramic Tile - Routine Care

Contaminants and spills on a glazed ceramic tile are, generally, easier to clean than other, more impervious surfaces.

- ***Glazed tile products should be cleaned routinely with an all-purpose, non oil-based household or commercial cleaner.*** The product chosen should also be grout joint cleaning compatible. The type of product may vary depending on the

tile application and use. A multipurpose spray cleaner, which removes soap scum, hard water deposits, and mildew designed for every day use, can be used on wall tile areas in residential baths and showers.

- The entire area should be cleaned and scrubbed with cleaner solution through the use of a **cotton mop, cloth, sponge, or non-metallic brush**. The entire area should be rinsed with clean water to remove any cleaning solution residue. Remember that you should **sweep or vacuum floor areas** prior to cleaning to remove any dust or debris. Routine **cleaners should never contain acids or ammonia**. Acids can damage the grout and the glazed surface of the tile, and ammonia can discolor the grout.
- Unglazed tile should be cleaned routinely with concentrated tile cleaners that have a neutral pH for safe regular use. These cleaners are better suited at removing grease, oils and normal spills from unglazed products. Again these products will vary depending on the application, amount of traffic and the use. The product chosen should also be compatible with cleaning the grout joints at the same time.

Removal of Sealers/Waxes/Floor Finishes:

If you need to remove a topical sealer or floor wax from a ceramic tile you should use a Tile Sealer & Adhesive remover. Always test a small area first. Apply a liberal amount of undiluted sealer & adhesive remover to a manageable area. Allow setting without drying until residue softens. Reapply if necessary until sealer softens and can be removed. If necessary, agitate with white nylon scrub pad. Wipe up the residue with a Cotton towel or sponge. Rinse thoroughly with clean water. Do not use on natural stone products.

Ceramic Tile - Grout Care

Grout is the material used to fill the spaces between the individual tiles. Grout comes in many colors. While color is important to the final finished look of the tile installation, it has

little effect on the functionality of the grout. The purpose of grout is, simply, to fill the joint between the tiles and becomes a permanent, integral component of the finished installation.

Penetrating/Impregnating Sealer:

Most tile installations use cementitious grouts. This type of grout should be sealed after installation to prevent the color from staining. The grout should be sealed with a penetrating/impregnating sealer (often called grout sealers) which does not contain silicone, as silicone can shorten the useful life of the sealer. Epoxy grouts, conversely, are chemically cured and acid resistant and, as a result, do not require a sealer. The application of a good quality penetrating/impregnating sealer into the grout joints of a cementitious grout will not change the natural color of the grout, but will prevent the penetration of moisture, simplify maintenance, and help prevent staining or discoloration. Only the grout needs to be sealed, not glazed floor or wall tiles. Grout can be sealed seventy-two hours after installation.

There are different grades of penetrating/impregnating sealers, therefore the useful life and price will differ between a low quality and high quality sealer. You may need to reapply the sealer on an annual basis depending on the sealer quality, traffic patterns, and maintenance routine. Some sealers have multiple year warranties for useful life. Refer to the manufacturer warranty, technical & product information for specific details on product installation, useful life, and product applications (including any warnings) before use.

Grout Maintenance:

Neither sealing the grout nor using a 100% Epoxy Grout will guarantee against surface build-up or discoloration of the grout. Grout needs to be cleaned on a periodic basis to remove any surface build-up. Routine grout cleaning can be done with a daily concentrated household or commercial cleaner depending on the application. When heavy duty grout cleaning is required, you will need to use a professional strength Tile & Grout Cleaner that is capable of removing grease, soap scum, body oil, mildew stains, algae,

and synthetic or acrylic waxes from the grout joints. This type of product can be purchased from most Home Centers, or through your local professional Floor Covering Dealer.

Restoration:

If a marble finish has become dull, scratched or etched, you can restore the natural shine through the use of a marble polish. Some marble polishes are available in kits. The process can be enhanced with the use of floor buffing machines. The process is generally a re-crystallization process to remove fine scratches and restore the original shine and polish to the stone. This is not an application of a topical sealer or wax to cover-up damaged or worn surfaces.

Grout Color Restoration:

When grout has been stained to the point that it cannot be maintained or returned to its natural color, you can return the grout back to its original color or any other color through the use of a "grout stain". Grout Stains are epoxy-based products that are specifically designed to penetrate into the grout and seal the surface with a permanent color. Once the grout has been stained there is no need to seal it any further with a penetrating/impregnating sealer. Prior to staining, the grout joint should be cleaned thoroughly to remove any dirt, oils, grease or sealers with a professional strength Tile & Grout Cleaner. This can be purchased from most Home Centers or through your local Professional Floor Covering Dealer.

Ceramic Tile - New Installations

Immediately after tile has been properly installed and grouted, the new installation should be covered with brown paper to protect it from debris during the remaining construction process. The grout joints should be dampened daily with clear water using a clean sponge or mop during the first 7 days. This procedure facilitates the grout cure and color lock. The paper will allow for two important things: (1) to protect the newly installed tile grout and (2) to allow moisture to escape from the grout as it cures further protecting the look and utility of the floor. This is an important step in achieving color consistency. Never use plastic or non-absorbent materials to protect freshly installed

tile. These types of non-absorbent products will trap moisture causing the grout to discolor during the curing period. The protective brown paper should remain until construction is complete and the floor is opened for intended (post-construction) use.

Pre-Grout Treatments:

Some unglazed tile products have rough or open pores in the surface that can trap grout particles during the grouting process. These grout particles become difficult to remove and can leave a stained appearance on the surface of the tile. For these products it is necessary to seal them with a pre-grout sealer to protect them from trapping the microscopic grout particles. This will also ease the grout clean-up process. Industry guidelines recommend that, prior to grouting, you seal terra cotta, saltillo, porcelain, and brick or quarry pavers with a high quality penetrating/impregnating sealer or with a temporary grout release sealer. Always test an area first to obtain best results. Glazed wall or floor tile products do not need to be sealed prior to grouting.

Post-Grout Clean-Up:

Grout haze is a film that has been left behind on the surface of the tile as part of the final grouting process. Usually this is buffed off the surface after the grout has achieved its initial 12 to 24 hour cure. The removal of the haze is often difficult when buffing with a clean ran or floor machine. Cementitious grout haze can be successfully removed with "Sulfamic" acid, which is a mild acid that attacks and breaks down cement smears. There are several products on the market called grout haze removers, which usually contain Sulfamic acid. Sulfamic acid can also be purchased in powder form and mixed with water to different strengths by qualified professionals. Similarly, **100% Solids Epoxy Grout** haze can be removed with an Epoxy Haze Remover. These removers are formulated to safely and quickly remove cured epoxy haze from new tile installations. Their unique formulation will soften most epoxy hazes for easy removal without damaging the grout or tile, usually in one application. Sulfamic acid or grout removers should never be used on Natural Stone products.

Natural Stone - Routine Care

Natural Stone Care & Maintenance

To insure your natural stone products will provide you with a lifetime of aesthetics and utility, a proper maintenance program is crucial. Natural Stone products are porous by nature and require a different maintenance program than traditional ceramic tile.

Natural stone requires a different maintenance routine than traditional, man-made ceramic tile. Many of the cleaners acceptable for use on ceramic tile can stain, damage or dull stone. Dirt and dust will scratch the surface of stone. Therefore, stone floors should be vacuumed or dust mopped frequently to remove abrasive agents from the stone surface. Natural stone should be cleaned with neutral cleaners. Stone cleaners should never contain acid or bleach. Acids, even a light solution of vinegar and water, will etch and eventually damage natural stone.

Stone Cleaners:

Only use cleaners specifically designed for cleaning stone. These cleaners contain no acids and are concentrated neutral pH cleaners that will not affect existing sealers or wax-type coatings. The surface of the stone should be dampened with clear water. This will keep the cleaning solution on the surface so it can be effective. A solution of the cleaner and water missed to manufacturer instructions should be applied to the stone surface with a sponge or mop. On walls, kitchen counters or vanity tops, a spray bottle can be used to apply the cleaning solution. Allow sitting for manufacturers specified amount of time (usually 3 to 5 minutes). Agitate with a sponge, synthetic mop, soft bristle brush or through the use of a floor-scrubbing machine. Mop up dirty solution and buff dry.

Once the stone has been cleaned, you can periodically apply a Spray-Buffer wax-type floor finish to enhance the beauty and luster of polished stone (including countertops). Apply the finish with a spray applicator and buff immediately with a white nylon pad. Reapply as often as needed, depending on volume of surface traffic and consistency of routine maintenance program. This product is not designed to restore the original shine, but is intended to maintain and protect the original shine. This can be purchased from most Home Centers or through your local Professional Floor Covering Dealer.

Heavy-Duty Stone Cleaning:

When some areas have been neglected, you will need to use a heavy-duty stone cleaner and degreaser to effectively remove dirt, grease, grime, waxes and floor finishes. These cleaning products are concentrated and designed to deep clean the stone without damaging it. Apply the solution of the cleaner and water mixed to manufacturer instructions to the stone surface with a sponge or mop. Allow setting for manufacturer-specified amount of time. Agitate with a sponge, synthetic mop, and soft bristle brush or through the use of a floor-scrubbing machine. Mop up dirty solution and buff dry. Be sure to change out the cleaning solution every 100 square feet to avoid reintroducing dirty water during the cleaning process. Rinse thoroughly with clean water when finished. After cleaning you may apply the Spray-Buff wax-type floor finish to enhance the natural shine.

Stain Removal:

Stone poultice will remove stains and grout haze from stone. Poultice is a fine, non-acidic, absorptive clay cleaning powder that removes deep-set oil stains, grease and light cementitious grout haze from polished and unpolished natural stone.

CAUTION: Poultice may dull the shine of the polished stone. If this occurs you will need to use a marble polish to restore the natural shine.