

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 coating or 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.

Glass Tiles

For routine cleaning, use any non-abrasive cleaning compound recommended for either glass or tile

Metal Signatures/Metal Ages/Urban Metals

To clean, use a liquid non-abrasive household cleaner.

DO NOT use scouring pads, steel wool, sandpaper or other abrasive products.

Avoid cleaners containing ammonia, bleach or abrasives.

Always test in small inconspicuous area while using a new cleaner to ensure compatibility.

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.

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.

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 rag 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-Buffer 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, nonacidic, 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.

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.

Natural Stone - New Installations

Sealing is strongly recommended for newly installed marble and other natural stone to provide maximum below surface stain protection. Consult your Professional Floor Covering Dealer or Home Center Store to ensure that you select a high quality sealer to protect your natural stone. Immediately after natural stone has been installed and grouted, the new installation should be covered with brown paper to protect it from debris during the remain construction process. The protective brown paper should remain in place until construction is completed and the area is opened to intended (post-construction) use.

Pre-grout Sealing:

A non-sanded grout is strongly recommended for natural stone installations due to the narrow grout joints customarily preferred. This type of grout has very fine particles of cement, polymers and color pigments that can penetrate the microscopic pores of the stone surface where they become trapped and appear as a stain in the stone. Therefore, all travertine, slate, tumbled stone and honed/flamed/unpolished granite should be sealed prior to the grouting process to protect them from staining. The application of a good quality sealer should be used as a grout sealer and applied again as the final sealing process once the installation is finished.

Types of Sealers:

A premium natural look penetrating/impregnating sealer is the normal choice on polished or honed marble, limestone, granite, or where the natural color of a slate is desired. A stone enhancer sealer is often used on tumbled, antique stones or on slate where a darker, enriched or highlighted character is desired. When choosing either one of these types of sealers, make sure the brand you have chosen is formulated to provide maximum stain protection for stone products. Stone products should be tested periodically per manufacturer's instructions to insure that the sealer is working effectively.

Penetrating/impregnating stone sealers is a no-sheen, natural look sealer that can be water-based or solvent-based, good for interior and exterior applications. Most quality sealers of this type are rated to protect the stone a minimum of 10 years.

Stone enhancer sealers are also a no-sheen, penetrating/impregnating sealer that are formulated to darken, enrich and highlight the natural color and beauty of tumbled, antique or slate products.

They will rejuvenate and improve the appearance of worn and weathered stone. Always test loose pieces of stone to ensure desired effect with enhancing sealers. However, they will also darken the color of grout joints. They are, generally, suitable for interior and exterior use, and rated to protect the stone a minimum of 3 years.

Finishing:

A stone floor finish should be applied to a polished natural stone floor only. This type of product will help enhance the shine and provide a protective coating for "soft" or polished marbles. Verify the finish is a wax-type finish designed to add luster and enhance the beauty of sealed and polished natural stone only. A topical finish may change the appearance and performance of your stone, so always test a small area first. Application of topical sealer or wax should never be done as an attempt to add a shine to a honed, scratched or non-polished stone product. This will only create maintenance and/or slip resistance problem. Consult the manufacturer of any surface-altering products for more detailed information about the impact of its specific product on safety, maintenance or appearance of your stone.

Saltillo Tile - Routine Care

Soft clay tiles are categorized as specialty use products, and as such they are generally not governed by the same requirements as glazed or unglazed ceramic tile. These products will require some type of topical sealer protection. These sealers are designed to provide stain resistance and a durable finish to protect clay tile against wear. Pre-sealing the tile prior to grouting will act as a pre-grout sealer, provided it is applied over a clean tile surface. An additional final coat over the grouted floor will complete the sealing process along with providing the final grout stain protection.

There are two common types of sealers used today for sealing specialty tiles. The first is a water-based blend of acrylic polymers. This product allows for moisture vapor transmission, and it can be reapplied over itself, without stripping or removing the old sealer when the original application has become worn. The second type is a solvent-based sealer. Solvent-based sealers are not as forgiving after they have become worn, they must be stripped and removed prior to reapplication. Both types should be UV stable, which means the ultra violet rays from the sun should not break them down. You should always follow the manufacturer's instructions for use, maintenance and precautions.

The expected wear of the topical sealer will vary depending on the hardness, surface texture, type or area, usage, and type of maintenance products used. However, the average expected use life of the sealer, when properly prepared, is a maximum of 3 years. Harsh cleaning methods, high-alkaline or solvent-based cleaners can significantly lower the expected life of the sealer. Concentrated tile cleaners are recommended for routine cleaning.

Maintenance Cleaning

Highly alkaline, acidic, ammoniated, abrasive cleaners and/or bleach may break down the sealer, adversely affecting repellency and may not be good for the tile or grout. Use a neutral cleaner specially formulated for tile and grout.

For routine cleaning:

We recommend DuPont™ StoneTech® Professional Stone & Tile Cleaner.

1. Mix 2 ounces of Stone & Tile Cleaner concentrate in 1 gallon of warm or hot water. (Note: One gallon of concentrate makes 64 gallons of cleaning solution.)
2. Apply mixed solution with a damp mop, sponge or appropriate professional cleaning equipment.
3. Clean entire area with mop, changing mop water often to ensure that soil is not re-deposited. Wipe or rinse cleaned area.
4. Let area dry completely before using.

You may also use DuPont™ StoneTech® Professional Stone & Tile Cleaner in the ready-to-use spray bottle or wipes.

Re-Sealing and Protecting

For interior surfaces, resealing should be performed every 3-5 years. For exterior surfaces, resealing should be performed every 1-3 years. Terrazzo surfaces must be sealed to prevent or minimize staining. Leaving terrazzo untreated may greatly hinder the complete removal of stains in the future. The following sealer suggestion is for impregnating the stone and grout and will allow the stone to breathe.

For a natural looking protector on interior and exterior surfaces we recommend DuPont™ StoneTech® Professional Impregnator Pro® Sealer. It offers heavy duty protection against oil- and water-based stains in a solvent-based formula.

1. Ensure area is well-ventilated during application and until the surface is dry. Use a respirator if unsure that area is well ventilated. A NIOSH-approved respirator with a combination HEPA/organic vapor cartridge is recommended. Follow respirator manufacturer's instructions for use.
2. Make sure surface is clean, completely dry, and free of waxes and coatings. Mask off any surfaces not intended to be treated.
3. Liberally apply an even coat using a paint pad (preferred), roller, brush, or pump-up garden sprayer for larger jobs. **DO NOT USE A POWER SPRAYER.** Do not thin before using.
4. Allow sealer to penetrate surface for 15- 30 minutes. During this time, distribute excess sealer over entire area to ensure even penetration. **DO NOT ALLOW EXCESS IMPREGNATOR PRO® TO DRY ON SURFACE.**
5. Thoroughly wipe entire surface with dry cloth to remove excess DuPont™ StoneTech® Professional Impregnator Pro® from surface.

6. A second coat may be needed for more porous terrazzo tile surfaces and should be applied one hour after initial application, as directed in steps 3- 5.
7. If excess sealer was not completely wiped off and a residue appears, wipe entire surface with a towel dampened with sealer. Use a white nylon scrubbing pad to loosen residue and follow with white absorbent towel to remove.
8. Full cure is achieved after 24-72 hours; foot traffic may begin in 6- 8 hours. Cover with red rosin paper if foot traffic must resume before the recommended time periods have passed.
9. Rags and equipment that are wet with product may be combustible. Clean up promptly after job is complete. Clean equipment with mineral spirits and allow it to dry in a well-ventilated area. Allow rags to dry in a well-ventilated area out of the reach of children and pets. When dry, dispose of in accordance with local waste disposal regulations.

Disclaimer

Dal-Tile does not manufacture installation products or tile cleaning/maintenance products. Dal-Tile provides the information contained herein to its customers as an information source only. The products identified in this website may have chemicals that cause reactions in certain individuals. Dal-Tile strongly recommends the use of safety glasses, respirators (masks) and gloves in handling any materials that contain chemicals. Dal-Tile, in keeping with its Healthy Planet objectives, recommends the proper disposal of any scrap tile/stone, installation and/or maintenance products discussed herein. Please contact the manufacturer directly, PRIOR to usage, to obtain proper handling instructions, application instructions and warning concerning potential health hazards for any product contemplated for use. Dal-Tile also strongly recommends that you ALWAYS test a small area PRIOR to usage of any installation/tile/cleaning/maintenance product to determine whether the product you are about to apply serves its intended purpose.