



TS RENOVATIONS · TILE & GROUT CARE

Tile Care Guide

Every tile material wears a little differently underfoot and on the wall, and asks for its own kind of care. Here's what makes each one a good fit, and how to keep it looking its best for years to come.

AT A GLANCE

Porcelain & Ceramic → **Glass & Vinyl** → **Natural Stone** →

Ten Habits That Keep Your Tile In Top Shape

A FEW THINGS TO KNOW FIRST

Tile covers more ground in a home than almost any other material, floors, walls, showers, backsplashes, entries, and increasingly outdoor spaces, and it's asked to perform differently in every one of those spots. Choosing the right tile for the job is half the decision, caring for it afterward is the other half, and that second half is what keeps it looking sharp for decades.

Grout is worth thinking about right alongside the tile itself. It's porous by nature, no matter what tile surrounds it, and it's almost always the first thing to show its age. Keeping it sealed protects the tile as much as the grout lines themselves.

BEST FIT BY ROOM

Porcelain

Dense enough for exterior use, it covers entries, patios, and high-traffic floors, and shows up just as often on walls and fireplace surrounds.

Natural Stone

A premium fit for entries, showers, and floors, though the softer stones want a sealed, drier spot to hold up well.

Ceramic

At its best on walls, backsplashes, and lighter-traffic floors, indoors where it won't face a hard freeze.

Glass & Vinyl

Glass suits backsplashes, accent walls, and mosaic work; vinyl fits well underfoot in mudrooms, basements, and bathrooms where a warmer, more resilient floor makes sense.

Get to Know Your Materials



PORCELAIN & CERAMIC

Porcelain

Fired at a higher temperature and pressed denser than ceramic, porcelain runs its color straight through the body, so a chip barely shows, and that same density is what rates it for a hard freeze outdoors. It's also printed and textured to mimic wood grain or natural stone, at a fraction of what the real material costs.

Ceramic

Built from a softer clay body and finished with a glazed surface, ceramic is the more affordable option of the two and comes in the widest range of colors and patterns of any tile material. That softer body is also why it isn't rated for a hard freeze or heavy exterior use.

GLASS & VINYL

Glass Tile

Made by fusing recycled or raw glass under heat, glass tile is nonporous and reflective, catching light in a way no other tile material can, and it's often set in small mosaic pieces or decorative sheets. A soft cloth keeps it scratch-free; an abrasive pad is the one thing to avoid.

Vinyl Tile

Built from layered, printed PVC with a tough wear layer on top, vinyl tile (LVT) is fully waterproof, skips sealing altogether, and some styles even come with grout lines built into the design for the tile look with none of the upkeep. A hot pan or direct sun can still soften or discolor it.

NATURAL STONE

Marble

Cool, elegant, and softly veined, marble tile develops a gentle patina over time, part of its character. It's on the more porous side of the natural stones, so staying ahead of sealing matters most here, keeping that patina a choice rather than a stain.

Slate

A naturally cleft, richly textured stone that's slip resistant even when wet. It's also one of the softer natural stones, prone to flaking in thin layers over time, so a proactive sealer schedule matters more here than with denser stones like marble or travertine.

Travertine

Known for its naturally pitted texture, travertine can be filled smooth or left honeycombed for a more rustic look. Its warm, earthy tones bring an Old World feel to a floor or wall, and like marble, it benefits from regular sealing.

Limestone

Soft and matte with a quiet, uniform look, limestone belongs to the same family as marble and travertine and shares their porous nature. It patinas gracefully with age and takes well to honing if it's ever due for a refresh.

WORTH KNOWING

Grout & Silicone

Epoxy grout resists staining and rarely needs sealing, but sanded grout and silicone caulk in wet areas are worth checking yearly. Silicone, not grout, belongs at a tub line or seam.

Backsplashes

A kitchen backsplash collects grease and cooking residue, and a bathroom backsplash picks up makeup and skincare products; both wipe clean easily if it's done before either sets in.

Hand-Painted

Decorative and hand-painted tile bring color a plain tile can't match, but the extra porosity means sealing it before grouting and again on a regular schedule after that.



Tile and radiant heat are a natural match. Few flooring materials conduct and hold heat as evenly as tile, which is why it's the standard choice for a radiant floor system. If a future renovation has that in the plans, tile is already built for it.

✧ Ten Habits That Keep Your Tile In Top Shape

A few of these habits apply everywhere tile is installed, entries, kitchens, and bathrooms alike. Others matter most for natural stone, grout, or wet areas specifically.

1

Match your cleaner to the material.

Porcelain, ceramic, and glazed tile tolerate a stronger cleaner, while natural stone and hand-painted tile need something gentler, since acidic products etch stone and dull painted glaze.

2

Put resealing on a calendar.

Natural stone depends on it: most sealants hold up one to three years depending on traffic, and waiting for a stain to show means the seal has already failed.

3

Handle grout stains as soon as you spot them.

A dedicated grout cleaner and a soft brush handle most stains before they set in, dulling the whole floor's look and taking real effort to reverse.

4

Protect slate entries through a Vermont winter.

Slate's soft surface is popular for entries and mudrooms, but that softness means grit, sand, and road salt take a toll; a mat at the door catches most of it first.

5

Use furniture glides, and lift rather than drag.

Tile is one of the most durable flooring choices available, but a dragged appliance or chair leg can still chip an edge or crack a corner.

6

Watch grout and caulk lines for cracking or gapping.

A tired bead at an inside corner or the tub line is worth replacing before water finds its way behind the tile and causes damage you can't see.

7

Add a slip-resistant mat wherever tile meets water.

Polished natural stone and glossy glazed tile both get slick when wet, and a mat at the tub or shower entry is cheap, easy insurance.

8

Run the bathroom fan during and after every shower.

Keeping humidity down is the single best defense against mildew taking hold in grout lines and corners, tile's most persistent enemy.

9

Wipe backsplash tile down regularly.

Grease and cooking residue in a kitchen, and makeup or skincare products in a bath, both stain grout fast if they're left to sit for more than a day or two.

10

Test any new cleaning product in an inconspicuous spot first.

A product that looks safe on the label can still dull a glaze or strip a sealant across an entire floor before you notice.

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Built to Last



Stay on top of these habits and your tile will keep earning its place: showers taken every morning, splatters wiped off the backsplash after dinner, muddy boots coming in the back door. Manufacturer warranties on porcelain and ceramic typically cover material defects, and the habits in this guide are what keep everything else, the grout, the seal, the shine, looking just as sharp.

Give the grout and the seal a little attention, and the tile will hold up beautifully to everyday life.



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