

Frequently Asked Questions: Stone Tile

1. Is there any special care for natural stone?

Natural stones—especially calcite-based stones such as marble, travertine, limestone, and many slates—have a delicate chemical composition that may interact in “strange” (damaging) ways with the cleaning solutions that are not specifically formulated for the task.

Some spills will turn out to be detrimental to stone if unattended. Orange juice, lemonade, wine, vinegar, liquors, tomato sauce, yogurt, salad dressing, perfume, after shave, the wrong cleaning products and so on, through a long list, most likely won't damage “granite” and “green marble” surfaces, but will ETCH polished marble, travertine, limestone, onyx, alabaster and many a slate. To prevent this from occurring, remove spills as quickly as possible. DON'T rub the spill, only blot it. DON'T use cleaning products on or near your natural stone unless the label specifies that it is safe on natural marble (cultured marble is man-made, and it's basically a plastic material). This includes glass cleaner to clean the mirror over a marble vanity top, or a liquid toilet bowl cleaner when the toilet is set on a marble floor.

2. Do you have any suggestions for maintaining stone shower stall installations?

DO monitor your grout and caulk lines periodically and address any problem immediately.

DO clean your shower stall daily. The easiest and most effective way is to spray the walls and floor of the stall with a diluted solution of water and spray cleaner, then squeegee.

Removing Soap Scum

If you notice an accumulation of soap film (especially on the lower part of the walls and on the floor pan)

DO use a soap film remover specifically formulated to be effective at doing the job of cleaning soap scum and hard mineral deposits, while not negatively interacting with the chemistry of natural stone.

Treating Mildew

If mildew appears on the grout lines of your shower enclosure

DO clean the mildew stain with a mildew stain remover that has been formulated to be safe on natural stone, while being very effective at removing mildew and other biological stains.

3. Why is it important to seal your stone?

Sealers for stone are all below-surface products and will not alter in any way, shape or form the original finish produced by the factory. They will not offer protection to the surface of the stone, either. They will only penetrate the inside of the stone by being absorbed (assuming that the stone is porous enough to allow this to happen), clogging the stone pores, thus reducing its natural absorbency rate. Sealers will help prevent possible accidental spills of staining agents from being absorbed by the stone. Marble and travertine are NOT very porous. Should you spill a few drops of water onto a polished travertine tile it will take a while for it to be absorbed (the area under the water will become darker). On the other hand, all granites must be sealed. Granite is more porous than marble and will stain if not protected with a good-quality impregnator-type stone sealer. Sealers for stones, which are below surface, penetrating-type sealers (better referred to as impregnators), are designed to do one thing and one thing only: clog the pores of the stone to inhibit staining agents from being absorbed by it.

4. How are stone tiles installed?

Stone tile installation is very similar to ceramic tile installation. The main difference is the greater size and weight of the marble tiles.

5. How do you cut stone tile?

To cut stone tiles, use a wet saw, which you can rent at most equipment-supply centers. After cutting; should you need to sand the edges, do so with a power sander. Start with coarse 80-grit sandpaper and gradually work up to extra-fine 400 grit. Then polish the edges with a polishing wheel and buffing compound.