

DESIGN TILE & STONE

www.designtile.net
905 Greg Street
Sparks, Nevada 89431
(P) 775.355.1303
(F) 775.355.3275
(E) info@designtile.net

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

<http://www.designtile.net/faqs.html>

What is the difference between ceramic and porcelain?

Ceramics are generally made with red-clay based ceramic and have a color screened top. The screening is often 1-4 patterns repeating throughout the batch. Ceramic tiles are less dense than porcelain and are more likely to chip or break once installed. Some ceramics are made to be wall tiles only and will crack if installed in improper locations. The price for machined ceramics is generally less than porcelain. (Handmade ceramics are often comparable or more.) Ceramic tile usually requires a space joint installation.

Porcelains are fired at high temperatures, creating a very dense and durable material. Some porcelain tiles are offered in through-body meaning the main color, not pattern, runs through the whole tile. It is unlikely a porcelain tile will chip but if it does, it is typically less noticeable than if a ceramic chips due to its base color. If tiles are not through-body, they are generally a bone or tan colored base. Some porcelains have the same screening process as ceramics but many are changing to turn-table process, the colors are layered on in different ways creating a completely random look, where no two tiles are alike. (See the Western Stone Series on the [Products page](#).) Porcelains generally require space joints but are occasionally available "rectified", which means the tiles were cut after being fired, providing a straight line for the installer to work with. Rectified tiles can be set tight joint. Porcelain is a dense enough that the installer can bullnose the edges in the same way as they do a natural stone. Porcelain can also withstand freeze-thaw conditions.

The trend in man-made tile seems to be toward porcelain. Due to its hearty nature and durability, many stores and installers prefer it since there are fewer call-backs and post-installation problems.

Why shouldn't I use marble on my kitchen counter tops?

Due to the density of marble it is not recommended for kitchen areas. Marbles are a soft stone and are more likely to stain, scratch and etch as compared to granite. Granite is a much better choice for your kitchen counters because it is stain and scratch resistant due to its density, particularly after it has been properly sealed. Granite can also accept having hot items placed on it without the possibility of scorching.

What is the difference between Travertine, Marble & Limestone?

Travertine is a sedimentary rock created by calcium carbonate minerals. When pure, travertine is white (such as Alabastrino travertine), but most often is found in a more brown to yellow tone due to its impurities (Noce, Classico, etc.). Travertine is available in polished, honed, and antiqued finishes. The most obvious characteristic of travertine is the swirl of the stone, its porosity, and small holes. Often the holes are filled by the factory, although stone is generally available with the option of having the holes

filled or unfilled.

Limestone is a rock of sedimentary origin composed primarily of calcium carbonate and magnesium. Density can range from low to high. It contains a number of distinguishable natural characteristics, including calcite streaks or spots, fossils or shell formations and a grainy appearance.

Marble is a metamorphic rock resulting from the recrystallization of limestone. It is characterized by its clear looking (not grainy) background and veins. Marble is most commonly known for its polished finish although it is available in tumbled, antiqued and honed finishes too.

Can I use slate on my outdoor patio, here in Northern Nevada?

In our climate we have drastic temperature changes that limit us to certain materials. Materials considered for outdoor use should be freeze-thaw resistant, meaning they are dense enough so that water will not soak into the material, freeze, and crack. More porous materials such as slate do not hold up well outdoors. We recommend more dense materials such as granite, quartzite, and porcelain for exterior use. Tiles must be set over existing concrete that has been properly water-proofed. We also sell pavers both for patios and drive-rated areas which can be set on base.

What is the difference between granite and a quartz-composite material such as Silestone?

Each has its advantages and disadvantages. The quartz-composite materials are made from a granite / resin mix. The look is less natural, being very uniform and predictable. Its advantage is that it is stain and scratch resistant due to its density, particularly after it has been properly sealed. Granite can also accept having hot items placed on it without the possibility of scorching. The main advantage to granite, that a man-made material cannot provide, is the natural beauty of stone.

What is the most durable material with the least amount of maintenance?

Porcelain is the most dense material on the market. Due to its density, liquids cannot penetrate the surface alleviating the need to seal or to be concerned with staining. Once properly installed, it's very unlikely a tile will break or crack.

Where does stone come from?

Stone comes from quarries which are located all over the world. A quarry is a type of open-pit mine from which rock or minerals are extracted. Quarries are generally used for extracting building materials, such as dimensional stone. Quarries are usually shallower than other types of open-pit mines. Quarries can be located in flat plains or on the side of a mountain.

Why does granite stain?

Granite is like any other natural stone; it can be dense or porous and is absorbent to some degree. Stones that have more swirls or veins tend to be more porous and absorbent. These swirls and veins show the movement of the stones active molten history. Generally, stone with smaller crystals are more absorbent than granites that have large crystals.

Stones have different porosity because of their mineral composition and geological formation. Depending on the process in which the stones were formed, and where in the world they were formed, affects the porosity of the stone.

A Few Words About Tile, Stone & Grout Maintenance

What is sealer?

Sealer is like a coat of armor for your stone and/or grout. Sealer will decrease the likelihood that anything can stain or harm your surface. We believe that you should always use a quality stone sealer, allowing you to retain the natural beauty of the surface.

Why should I seal my natural stone?

Protected stone, tile and grout will be easier to clean, resist staining, and provide a safer and healthier environment. Considering the investment, why wouldn't you provide the surface with the maximum protection possible?

How do I choose a proper sealer?

We carry many types of sealers and can recommend the proper type. Our sealers are available to sample in our showroom. If you bring a piece of your stone to us we can help to create a test sample using different finishes and sealers prior to purchasing.

Can I use typical house-hold cleaners to clean my natural stone?

This is one area that is very important in stone care. It's important to use non-abrasive and acid-free cleaners. Keep in mind that stone is soft and can be scratched with abrasive cleaners and also scrub brushes. It may also be dulled or etched over time by acidic cleaners (such as vinegar/water, Windex or 409). We have appropriate cleaners available in our showroom.

How do I clean my recently installed and sealed stone counter tops?

Our suggestion for your ongoing care would be to use our Revitalizer Daily Use Cleaner with Protector. Not only is this an excellent cleaner for removing everyday soils and spills, but every time that you clean you're reinforcing the protection of the initial sealing.

Can I use your products designed for stone on my other surfaces?

We do not recommend our products to be used on anything other than their intended use.

How can I tell if my stone has already been sealed?

Apply a drop of water at least 1/2-inch in diameter to the top and the stone and let stand for at least 15 minutes. Cover with a glass to inhibit evaporation. If the stone did not darken then your stone is probably sealed against water-based stains.

Is one coat of sealer enough for natural stone?

When sealing a very dense stone, one coat may be sufficient. Most stones and grout will require two coats. A few of the more absorbent stones may need additional coats to be properly sealed. The Design Tile & Stone team will be able to assist you in determining your needs.

Will my natural stone look glossy after sealing or enhancing?

No, unless you selected a topical, high gloss sealer such as a lacquer. If properly applied, impregnating

sealers will leave your surface looking natural. Enhancing sealers are designed to darken the stone while retraining the original polished, matte or honed look.

There's a hazy, grout looking residue smeared all over my newly installed ceramic tile floors? Can this be fixed?

The haziness that you see is probably grout smear from the installation process. This can be safely removed using our Restore Restoration Cleaner for Ceramic Tile and Grout. Make sure you protect all walls, baseboards, carpeted areas, plants, foliage and metals. Restore™ may damage stainless steel and other surfaces. Sweep or dust mop loose dirt and debris off of the floor. Prepare a solution of 1 part of Restore™ mixed with 4 parts of warm or hot water. Liberally apply over your floor using a sponge or mop. Agitate well using a stiff nylon bristle scrub brush or stiff bristle push broom. Rinse well with clean water and mop, sponge or wet vacuum to remove the remaining solution. Repeat the rinsing and wet vacuum process to insure that all dirt, soil and cleaner residue have been removed. Thoroughly rinse all metal surfaces. I would strongly recommend sealing the floor once you've removed the grout haze to protect it from staining and soiling. Use our Grout Sealer for protection against oil and water-based stains.

Is it really necessary to seal stone outdoors? What do I need to protect it against?

Outdoors can be very harsh on your stone. There are things that can affect your stone that are visible like pollen and dirt and then there are things that are not quite that easy to see like UV Rays. You make an investment to your home by putting natural stone in your yard, so it would be worth it to seal the stone and preserve its natural beauty. Sealing with our sealers will give you maximum protection against rain, other chemicals, oils from trees and plants, & all of those wonderful and fun filled outside barbecues. We have a variety of sealers to choose from. We have sealers that will preserve your natural look, sealers that will enhance the natural look, and high gloss lacquer to give it that immaculate shine. As the home owner you need to decide what look you would like to achieve.

I put something down on my polished white marble table and it left a white ring mark on it. How can I clean this spot?

This kind of discoloration and ring mark that you are noticing are likely not stains but actual etch marks. Etch marks occur on polished marble and other stones of this nature due to acids or other chemicals reacting with the minerals in the stone. This causes the stone to feel rough and look a little discolored, usually lighter. In order to remove these there would have to be a refinishing process done to restore its original, polished look. If it is in fact a stain, a product called poultice can be tried. The purpose of a poultice is to wick the stain out of the stone.

Why does the name of stone change from one store to the next, although the stone looks identical?

Stone could sometimes be from the same quarry but from different sections and different owners. Some stones look identical but originate from different parts of the world, which makes the appearance look the same but possibly with different mineral composition. The name changes could also be a marketing technique.

How can I give my stone fireplace a wet, high gloss look while being safe around the fireplace?

The StoneTech Professional High Gloss Lacquer is a coating as well as a sealer. The lacquer will give you the wet look you are looking for plus the gloss. If you are just in search for a wet look and not such a high gloss, we do have our StoneTech Professional Enhancer Pro. The enhancer is a sealer as well as an enhancer. It will give your stone the wet look with out the shine. Both products are safe around your fireplace once they have cured.

Please let us know if we can help you with anything else...

We are here to serve you!

The Design Tile & Stone Team

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