

Smart Shopping for Home Furnishings



Selecting Ceramic Tile

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Shopping for ceramic tile? Tile is durable, stain and grease resistant, hard-wearing, colorfast, fireproof, and easily cleaned. It can be used for walls or floors in bathrooms, entrance halls, kitchens, and laundries where water damage is a possible problem. To select a quality tile, be able to answer these questions.

- WHAT'S ON THE MARKET?
- WHAT TILE THICKNESS DO I NEED?
- HOW MUCH TILE TO I NEED?
- WHAT'S THE CONDITION OF THE UNDERSURFACE?
- WHAT'S ON THE WARRANTY?

WHAT'S ON THE MARKET?

There are many different tiles on the market, such as frost and heat resistant tiles, small tiles, quarry tiles, and tiles designed with a rough surface to absorb heat from sunlight and radiate the heat back into the room. Vitreous and Monocuttura tiles are the frost and heat resistant tiles and some of the hardest tiles on the market. Mosaic tiles are 2 inches or less and come mounted on paper for easy installation. When purchasing, select small tiles with a paper backing or mesh that covers as little area as possible so that more of the adhesive sticks to the tile instead of the paper backing or mesh. Quarry tile comes in different colors, such as orange or red, and in various sizes and thicknesses. It is frost and heat resistant, impervious to grease, liquids, and moisture, easy to care for, and very durable. Quarry tile comes with or without a glaze. It can however, be ordered pre-waxed for easy grouting when using epoxy grouts. The prewax is not permanent. Some of the imported tiles are often confused with quarry because of the clay color. However, imported tiles are available in glazed and unglazed.

Ceramic tiles come in different designs and finishes. The designs vary from soft textures to deep design impressions. Tiles are available in high-gloss, mat, and duraglaze finishes. The highgloss finish is very shiny and shows scratches. The mat finish has a dull surface. The duraglaze looks like two layers of finish.

Tiles can be purchased with a square or cushion edge (see Figure 10.1, Tile Edges). A cushion edge is a rounded edge, which is more difficult to grout. If you are doing your own work, the rounded edge is more difficult to install because of trying to get the grout even. The square edge is easy to grout, since all you have to do is draw a straight edge across the tile

surface. There is also tile with bullnose edges used for finishing partially tiled walls and other special areas.

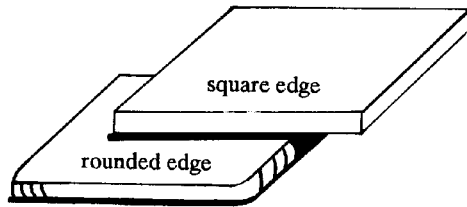


Figure 10.1. Tile Edges

Tiles come with different designs on the back. The tile back design is different for each company and is like a trademark. These designs are mostly non-functional.

When selecting tile, look for a tile without pits, chips, or black spots on the surface. These imperfections are caused when the glaze misses the tile or dirt gets on the tile when it is being glazed. Manufacturers separate

the imperfect tiles into lower grade tiles and use the tile without any noticeable imperfections for higher grade tiles. Some tile manufacturers do not separate the tile and the consumer gets a mixture of perfect and defective tiles. To get quality domestic tile, look for the tile carton with “standard grade” written on the box. Imported tiles are not graded. Since tile is very durable and costly to install, you should try to select the highest quality tile.

When you purchase tile it is a good idea to buy several extra pieces, since you may have to replace pieces that become damaged. After a few years the tile you purchased may be discontinued. In addition, you can never completely match the first dye lot colors.

WHAT TILE THICKNESS DO I NEED?

Tiles range from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick. The thicker the tile, the less likely it is to crack or break.

HOW MUCH TILE DO I NEED?

Ceramic tile is sold by the square foot. Multiply the height of the wall by its length in feet to get the amount of square feet of tile you will need. Deduct window and door measurements. If you’re doing a floor, multiply the width of the floor by its length to get the amount of square feet of tile you will need.

WHAT’S THE CONDITION OF THE UNDERSURFACE?

Ceramic tiles are used quite effectively on wood and concrete if installed correctly. For installation, ceramic tiles require a solid undersurface made of concrete with cement or a sand screen, plywood with a special setting material or a 4 x 8 sheet especially designed for this purpose. Make sure you use the appropriate setting material with the particular type of undersurface or the tile may not stick.

There are several different types of setting materials, which include organic adhesives, thin set mortar, epoxy, multi-purpose thin set, and quarry epoxy. These setting materials are used more appropriately for some areas of the home than others. Organic adhesives are used mostly for the walls. Thin set mortar is used over cement. Epoxy is used for floors and walls and very expensive.

WHAT’S ON THE WARRANTY?

There is no warranty on ceramic tile. In fact, on boxes of tile you will find the words “manufacturer not responsible for shade variations or surface imperfections.”

If you have broken tiles or extra tiles left over from a job, you can sometimes return these to the dealer. You may want to ask the dealer about this before purchasing your tile. If tiles are broken when you open the box, most retailers will replace the broken tiles. If you have extra tiles left over from the job and want to return them for credit, you may be charged a restocking fee.

✓ **QUALITY CHECKLIST**

After each question, answer with a yes* or no.

1. Is the surface smooth without any chips, pits, or black spots?
2. If purchasing small tiles, does the mesh on the back cover a small area?
3. Is the, undersurface properly prepared for the ceramic tile?
4. Are you using the correct setting material for the under surface?

* If you answered all these questions with a yes, you can be assured of getting quality ceramic tile.

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