

How to Install Cement Tile

Cement tile is not difficult to install but it is easy to mess up if you do not use proper tile setting materials and compatible sealers. If you are not using installation materials provided by Rustico Tile and Stone, proceed with common sense and consult specific manufacturer instructions for products being used. If you need to order proper installation materials, please contact us today.

When cement tile is installed correctly, you will enjoy a beautiful project space for many years. Consult with your local contractor to determine if these guidelines are appropriate for your project space. Rustico Tile and Stone is not liable for any tile installation for which we are not contracted to execute.

Stage 1: Subfloor & Tile Prep

- 1. Tiles must be installed over a flat, level, stable and completely dry concrete surface. Moisture from the subfloor can cause stains, pitting or cracking on the tile surface. Any source of moisture on the subfloor or wall where cement tile is being installed must be eliminated for the long-term success of the installation. We strongly recommend the use of an elastomeric product before you install your tile. Carefully handle the tiles face-to-face to avoid scratching the tile surface.*
- 2. To determine a point of origin in a room to begin the installation, consider the tile pattern, room size, and room shape. Consult with your tile installer.*
- 3. Use high-quality thinset adhesive. Fully modified thinset is recommended. Follow thinset manufacturer's instructions.*
- 4. Make sure that thinset is applied properly to the floor. Avoid air pockets forming between the floor and tiles.*
- 5. Do not beat tiles with a mallet or rubber hammer to set tiles. This can break the tiles or form thin cracks on the tile surface. Level your tiles using hand pressure. Remove excess adhesive from the surface with a damp cloth or sponge (when it is wet) to avoid any stains. Tiles should be cut using a sharp diamond-blade in conjunction with water to avoid chipping edges.*
- 6. Allow tiles and thinset to dry out completely before applying any concrete fortifiers and grout release products. Do not cover the tiles to avoid retaining moisture in the tile. Moisture can cause stains, efflorescence, rings on the tile surface, among other things. Do not step on tiles until the thinset is fully dry.*

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Stage 2: Care and Inspection

7. Do not allow boxes to get wet. Store the boxes in a dry area. Moisture or dampness can cause tiles to stain, fade, or create other damages on the surface.
8. Inspect the order carefully. Rustico Tile and Stone is not responsible for material that has been cut or installed. Installation deems acceptance. Throughout the installation process and handling of the tile, be careful not to damage the finished surface, edges, and corners of the tiles.
9. Cement tile is subject to color and shade variations from one tile to the next. It is recommended to mix tiles from different boxes during the installation process.
10. Cement tile may have residue on its surface when it's unpacked from the boxes. Before starting the installation, it is recommended to clean the tiles with a dry cloth to remove this residue. This prevents the residue from being smeared and sealed into the surface of the tile.

Stage 3: Seal, Grout, Seal

11. Cement tiles are porous and are not pre-sealed. Our 2-step sealer system is recommended.
 - A. Seal the tile with step 1 penetrating sealer before or after setting the tile with thinset. This is a primer sealer which prepares the tile for step 2 topcoat sealer. Step 1 product is a wipe on/wipe off sealer. It spreads easily with a paint roller or paint pad. Do not leave any excess sealer on the surface for any length of time. Wipe away excess sealer. There should be no excess sealer, residue or film on the surface of the tile. This sealer dries within 10 minutes so work small sections of tile at a time.
 - B. Apply grout release. Grout release should be purchased at a local home improvement store. Step 1 product alone is not sufficient as a grout release product (**despite the bottle indicating it as a grout release solution**). A separate grout release is needed to protect the surface of the tile from staining with grout haze. It is imperative that this step is not skipped.
 - C. Grout tile. It is imperative to clean all grout off of the surface of the tile.
 - D. After installation is complete and dry, apply step 2 topcoat sealer. This topcoat sealer will add scratch-resistance, UV protection, seals the grout, and provides your desired final sheen (extra low gloss or gloss finish).
12. Cement tiles are installed edge to edge with minimal grout line. Use non-sanded grout which allows for expansion. For larger grout lines, use sanded grout. The recommended grout joint is 1/16 – 1/2 inch. Joints should be free of all voids and pits. Once the grout has been applied and begins to dry, remove excess grout immediately. Do not affix duct tape, gaffer tape, or acetate directly on cement tile surface. These can discolor or stain your cement tiles.

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Stage 4: Cleaning & Maintenance

13. *After installation, wash tile with a pH neutral detergent such as StoneClean 104 tile cleaner from Rustico Tile and Stone. Do not use any acids or alkalines to clean tiles unless instructed by a professional for removing stains or efflorescence. Use StoneClean 104 or fine sandpaper to remove the stains or residue. Do not allow water or other liquids to spot, pool, or ring on the surface.*
14. *For ongoing maintenance, clean regularly with a natural detergent or StoneClean 104. Tiles can be buffed with a soft pad as well. Heavy foot traffic or outdoor installations may require additional maintenance. A natural patina will occur as the floor is maintained and wears over time.*
15. *The use of properly sized walk off mats at entrances and sweeping or dust mopping is most important to remove abrasive grit that may cause wear.*
16. *Do not allow any water accumulation or filtration. Moisture will cause stains, pitting, and cracking on the tile surface.*
17. *Reapplication of the topcoat sealer may be done depending on the wear of your floor.*

Familiarize yourself and your installer with these installation recommendations prior to beginning the installation process.

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