

Star Tile Centre - DIY Guide

Tile Installation

Tools Checklist

- **Tile Cutter**
- **Sponge**
- **Nippers**
- **Rubber**
- **Straight Edge**
- **Bucket**
- **Rubber Float**
- **¼" Notched or V-Notched Trowel**
- **Chalk and Cord Level**

Installation of Tile

Qualified ceramic tile contractors will agree that the traditional mesh and cement method of installation is the best choice. This involves the application of a vapour barrier over the subfloor, then a layer of wire lath, covered by a layer of a sand and cement mix (allowed to set fully), over which your tile will be installed with a premium polymer modified setting mortar. Floor tiles can be laid directly over a substrate of level, cured unpainted concrete.

Using a ½" plywood subfloor or ½" cement board over your solid plywood floor in lieu of wire lath and cement may be used in smaller areas.

A premium polymer modified floor mix should be used to install floor tiles over either of these surfaces.

No matter what method you choose, be sure the subfloor is first screwed to the joists every 4" to 6" to ensure it is solid.

Wall tiles in wet areas should be installed over ½" cement board. Wall tiles in dry areas can be installed over primed drywall.

Countertop tiles can be installed over cement board or ¾" plywood.

Layout

Walls and floors are rarely straight, so don't just start at the floor or wall edge. Walk into the room a few times noting what you see first. This is where you'll want the cleanest finish so try to have full tiles here. Snap two chalk lines at right angles to each other, so they intersect at the centre of your floor or wall area. This centres the installation, giving you straight lines to work with.

Start at the centre and lay a row of loose tiles to determine where cuts need to be. You can avoid cuts by moving tiles slightly off centre, and or opening or closing grout lines. When cutting tiles, score the tile only ONCE and press firmly for a good break.

Setting The Tiles

Follow the manufacturer's instructions for mixing the adhesive. Only mix what can be used in 20 minutes.

Holding a ¼" x ¼" square notched trowel at a 30 to 45 degree angle, firmly comb the adhesive onto the floor.

Trowel mortar over approximately 5 to 10 square feet at a time.

Working outward from the centre, set each tile with a pressing and slight twisting action. Do NOT slide them! Leave approximately 1/8" to 3/16" between tiles for grouting. Tap firmly for a secure bond. Wipe any mortar off the tile surface as you go with a warm damp sponge. Stay off the tiles for at least 12 hours. Keep space between tiles clean and free of mortar or it will telegraph through your grouting colour tomorrow.

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Setting Wall Tiles

Follow the same layout instructions as for floor tiles.

Holding a 3/16" v-notched trowel at a 30 to 45 degree angle, spread adhesive over a small working area. Set each tile into place and press firmly. Allow any glue to dry, then scrape it off carefully using a utility knife or razor blade.

Grouting

Wait 24 hours after installing the tiles before grouting.

Mix grout with water until it has a smooth consistency like cake icing or peanut butter. Only mix enough grout that can be used in 15 - 20 minutes.

Scoop grout onto the tile surface using a rubber float. Move the grout into the joint spaces using a diagonal motion. Go over the area repeatedly, working the grout into the joints making sure they are completely filled and packed firmly.

The grout dries quickly so wipe the tile surface clean using a damp, well rung-out sponge and clean water. Change the water frequently and be sure to wipe all excess grout off the tiles before moving on to the next section. If the grout dries on the tiles it will leave a haze and cannot be removed easily.

Grout sealers are recommended especially when using a light coloured grout. The grout must cure before sealing, so you must wait approximately 2 weeks. Do not let sealer dry on the tile as it will not come off.

Silicone all areas where two tile surfaces meet, where the tile meets the tub or countertops, and where two vertical walls meet. This will better compensate for expansion or movement at these joints.

For finishing touches, plastic and metal trims are available to cap any visible raw edges of wall and tiles or to provide a transition between tile and other flooring. These must be installed as you place the tiles as they fit under the exposed edge of the tile.

Helpful Hints

Tiles come in dye lots, so colours can vary slightly between boxes. Use the tiles out of several boxes as you're laying them to mask differences over a larger area. Check tiles thoroughly before beginning installation. Most warranties do not cover imperfections after the tile has been installed. Laying the tiles out in a "dry" installation is an excellent way of previewing and mixing the shade variations.

The adhesive should be the consistency of mayonnaise, standing in peaks but gradually starting to level out. It should not be crumbly or too runny. It should stand up in the ridges of your trowel but not be stiff.

Mix grout to a peanut butter consistency – smooth and thoroughly blended. There shouldn't be any lumps or dry patches.

Silicone all places where different surfaces meet.

Use the proper adhesive for the job. Never use wall tiles on the shower sill. Use a marble or corian sill instead. Overhang ¼" on both sides and tilt in toward the drain. Remove and replace silicone at least once a year.

TAKE YOUR TIME!