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CARE & MAINTENANCE GUIDE

STONE · CERAMIC · PORCELAIN · MOSAIC

# Tile Care.

*A practical reference for protecting, cleaning and preserving the beauty of fine tile surfaces — from glazed ceramic to natural stone.*

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STONE CERAMIC TILE WHOLESALERS  
ESTABLISHED REFERENCE EDITION

VOLUME 01  
SCTW.COM.AU

# What's inside.

**E**very tile type asks for a slightly different rhythm of care. This guide walks through six families — how each is made, where it belongs in the home, and the cleaning routine that keeps it looking the way it did the day it was laid.

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# 01

## CHAPTER ONE

# Glazed Ceramic Tiles.

**C**lay, earth, powder and water are mixed and processed to make ceramic tiles. Once shaped, the tiles are baked in a high-temperature oven called a kiln, then most are coated with a glass-like glaze and fired a second time — the glaze melts to the surface as it cools, sealing each piece against water and giving it its finished character.

Glazes arrive in many designs and textures, and each combination produces a different hardness or density. In general, lighter glazes create harder tiles; darker glazes make tiles less dense and a touch more fragile.

You will find glazed ceramic tiles in restrooms, bathrooms and outdoor swimming pools. They are easy

to clean, fire-resistant, scratch-resistant, stain-resistant and slip-resistant, which is why they are preferred in public spaces. They are also favoured for indoor décor for their beauty and variety. Even though they resist scratching, the glaze tends to show blemishes more readily — the one downside of using them at home.

## — Maintenance

Taking care of glazed ceramic tiles is surprisingly easy, but there is a right way to do it if you want the quality and appearance to hold up for years. Residue builds up over time, and left alone it can ruin the finish. When cleaning, use a solution made with a pH-neutral liquid and warm water, and scrub gently with a sponge that has no rough edges. Watch what you are doing as you work — being too rough on poor-quality tiles can damage the glaze.

## — Removing Floor Waxes, Finishes & Sealers

Floor waxes, finishes and sealers occasionally find their way onto your tiles by accident and should be cleaned off promptly. Use an adhesive remover together with a tile sealer, and again make sure the sponges have no rough edges. Run a small test on the corner of a single tile first to confirm the product is not too harsh for the finish. Once you're confident, apply a generous amount over the affected area until the residue loosens and lifts away with the sponge — then rinse with fresh water.

### QUICK RULE

pH-neutral cleaner · soft sponge · gentle pressure · rinse with clean water. The glaze is doing the protective work — your job is simply not to wear it down.

# 02

## CHAPTER TWO

# Porcelain Tiles.

**T**here are many designs of porcelain tiles, made in subtly different ways. Once you understand the differences, choosing the right model for a room becomes straightforward.

## Glazed Porcelain

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Glazed porcelain tiles are made almost the same way as glazed ceramic tiles — same materials, same firing process. The single difference is that the glaze is applied hot, which makes the finished tile much stronger and gives it a noticeably shinier appearance. That extra polish is exactly what makes them so popular as a decorative finish. In public spaces the glaze can become slippery when wet, so position them with that in mind.

### — Maintenance

Glazed porcelain is very easy to clean because it does not collect bacteria and germs the way more porous surfaces do. The easiest solution is two gallons of water mixed with a quarter cup of white vinegar. Stronger cleaners are available and many are labelled as safe for porcelain. Steam cleaning or dry cleaning both work well; avoid harsh soaps or detergents so you don't damage the surface or create a slip hazard, and dry the floor afterwards to eliminate water spots.

## Polished Porcelain

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Polished porcelain tiles are produced in the same way as glazed porcelain except that the glaze is not heated when applied, which leaves the finished tile a little more fragile. The surface is then polished so finely that it mimics the look of a glaze. The result is elegant enough for living rooms, balconies, patios, bedrooms and bathrooms — and considerably cheaper than its glazed counterpart, which is why polished porcelain is so widespread.

### — Maintenance Tips

Polished porcelain is a favourite among busy homeowners because it requires almost no day-to-day care. When the floor gets dusty, a clean, dry dust mop is enough. When it starts to look dull, a wipe with warm water restores the polish. Stains, however, set easily — wipe up anything spilled as quickly as possible, especially dark, acidic liquids like fruit juice and tomato sauce. Protect the surface from anything that can wear away the glaze: grout-removal products, acid-based liquids and harsh chemicals.

# Unglazed & Matte Porcelain

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Unglazed or matte porcelain tiles are ceramic tiles that skip the glazing process. They are thicker than other porcelain types, which makes them stronger. Some are polished after firing; others are left unpolished for a rustic look that suits outdoor walkways. They are scratch-resistant — useful outdoors — and versatile enough to work as decorative pieces throughout the home.

## — Maintenance

Their textured surface makes them harder to clean, but the extra effort is worth it. Sweep with a soft-bristled broom in every direction to lift loose dirt. Soak with warm water and a neutral-pH cleanser for five to ten minutes, then scrub in different directions with a soft brush and rinse with warm, clean water. In high-traffic areas you may need to do this daily, with a damp mop in between to keep things tidy. When grouting, cover the tiles with grout release so any spots can be cleared away cleanly afterwards.

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*"The glaze is doing the protective work —  
your job is simply not to wear it down."*

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# 03

## CHAPTER THREE

# Mosaic Tiles.

**M**osaic tiles ask for slightly more attention than regular unglazed tiles. They clean easily, but the cleaning has to happen regularly — or residue builds in the joints and slowly dulls the whole pattern.

### — Routine Cleaning

Always clean mosaic tiles with a solution of mild soap and clean water. Scrub gently with a non-abrasive cloth or sponge. When you're finished, rinse with clean, warm water and wipe everything dry with a fresh cloth. The aim is to lift soil before it has time to settle into the grout lines.

### — Pre-Grout Sealing

When installing mosaic tiles, a non-sanded grout is best because the grout joints are narrow. After the grout goes in, the very next step should be cleaning the new tiles — leaving the sealer to dry on the surface can permanently mar the look. Read the instructions on the grout you've used to confirm how to remove it; in most cases you'll apply a grout stripper, let it sit, and lift it away with a wet cloth.

#### DO

Mild soap, soft cloth, warm rinse, dry wipe. Clean often so deposits don't have time to stain the joints.

#### AVOID

Abrasive pads, harsh detergents, leaving grout residue on the surface to harden. All three are difficult to undo.

# 04

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Natural Stone Tiles.

**N**atural stone tiles are stones and rocks cut to size from the earth. They are the strongest and longest-lasting of all the tile families and bring a particular kind of beauty no manufactured surface can quite replicate.

Different materials behave differently, but stone tiles share a few common traits: extraordinary durability, a refusal to retain heat — which is what makes them so well-suited to kitchens — and a natural variation no two pieces share. They appear most often in outdoor flooring and décor, walkways, patios, gardens and garages, but their warmth also suits living spaces. Just remember that any room finished in stone will run a little cooler than its neighbours.

### — Maintenance

Natural stone is the most high-maintenance tile of all. Many common cleansers will damage the appearance of the surface, so check the label before you buy and confirm the product is suitable for natural stone. Place rugs over high-wear areas to protect the finish, and use slip-resistant mats beneath them. A daily pass with a dust mop lifts grit before regular brooms can scratch the surface.

Even sealed stone can stain, so any spill needs attention immediately — especially acidic foods and drinks. Wipe these up with a gentle soap and water cleanser and a non-abrasive sponge. Place mats and coasters are a sensible second line of defence between food, drink and the floor.

### — Stone Cleaners

Before cleaning, wet the surface with warm water. Use only acid-free cleansers with neutral pH levels — a diluted mix of warm water and dishwashing liquid also works well. Neither will damage the coating, but you must wipe up any residual cleanser thoroughly or you'll leave a film behind. Change your water often during cleaning so you're not spreading dirty water back across the floor. To finish, buff and polish with a wax-spray buff as needed.

### — Heavy-Duty Stone Cleaning

For more soiled tiles, step up to a non-hazardous stone cleanser made for the purpose. Follow the dilution instructions, and change your cleaning solution every hundred feet so you aren't scrubbing with contaminated water. When you're done, mop up the cleanser thoroughly — partly to protect the finish, partly to avoid a slippery floor.

## — Stone Mosaics

Stone mosaics require a little more care than regular stone tiles. Because stone is porous, many cleaners will damage the mosaic — pick one made specifically for natural stone mosaics. Always wet the surface before applying any cleanser.

## — Removing Stains & Restoration

Stains on a natural stone mosaic call for some elbow grease. A stone poultice, used gently, will draw most stains out. If the scrubbing dulls the surface — or you simply want to restore the shine — apply a marble polisher. Over time, the natural shine of a stone mosaic fades; a marble polisher will bring it back.

## — Sealing & Finishing

When sealing stone, pay attention to the type of sealer you choose. Water-based and solvent-based sealers can both be used indoors or outdoors. Test on a small piece of stone first to be sure the product behaves the way you expect. Before applying any finishing product, make sure the stone is polished.

# 05

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Unglazed Tiles.

**T**here are many styles of unglazed tiles, and your budget and preference will guide the choice. Unglazed ceramic is the most affordable in this family — rougher and thicker than its glazed cousin.

Because unglazed tiles skip the glazing step, they suit high-traffic areas and any space that benefits from a slip-resistant surface: kitchens, walkways and the dining floors of restaurants. They are scratch-resistant and easy to maintain. The trade-off is that, without a glaze to seal them, they are a little harder to keep clean. They are generally used as flooring in both residential and commercial settings.

### — Maintenance

The rougher surface traps dirt more easily, so cleaning happens more often — choosing the right cleanser is important. If staining is a concern, apply a wax sealer after installation. Be cautious around the grout while cleaning; damage there means re-grouting the floor.

#### **IF YOU USE CEMENTITIOUS GROUT**

Seal the grout with a silicone-free impregnating sealer within 72 hours of installation. Be careful to seal only the grout, not the tiles.

# 06

## CHAPTER SIX

# Grout Maintenance.

**S**ealing and grouting are the great preventative measures, but even with good habits, residue builds up over time. Every floor eventually needs grout work, and the way you handle it determines whether the floor keeps looking new.

### — Replacing Grout

From time to time you will need to remove and replace your grout. Clean the space thoroughly first — any debris trapped in the joints will compromise the new grout's adhesion and finish.

### — Grout Colour Restoration

Grout often turns an off-white colour that throws off the look of the surrounding tile. A grout stain — an epoxy-based product that restores colour and seals the grout in one step — brings the joint back to its original tone.

### — Cleaning Up After Grouting

Once grouting is finished, a thin film called "grout haze" appears on the tiles. Remove it immediately. Left in place for any length of time, it can permanently affect the surface. Sulfamic acid lifts grout haze cleanly — it comes in powder form and is mixed with water to the concentration the job needs.

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any debris in the joints will compromise the new grout."*

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# 07

REFERENCE

## Quick Reference Matrix.

**A** condensed lookup of what to use, what to avoid, and where each tile family belongs.

TILE TYPE	BEST CLEANER	AVOID	BEST FOR
<b>Glazed Ceramic</b>	pH-neutral liquid + warm water, soft sponge	Rough sponges, scouring pads	Bathrooms, restrooms, pool surrounds
<b>Glazed Porcelain</b>	Water + ¼ cup white vinegar / labelled porcelain cleaner	Harsh soaps & detergents	Indoor decorative surfaces
<b>Polished Porcelain</b>	Dry dust mop, warm water	Acid liquids, grout removers	Living rooms, bedrooms, patios
<b>Unglazed Porcelain</b>	Warm water + neutral-pH cleanser, soft brush	Hard bristles that scratch	Outdoor walkways, rustic interiors
<b>Mosaic</b>	Mild soap + clean water, non-abrasive cloth	Abrasives, dried grout sealer	Decorative walls, feature surfaces
<b>Natural Stone</b>	Acid-free, neutral-pH stone cleaner	Acidic foods, generic cleaners	Kitchens, patios, walkways, gardens
<b>Unglazed Ceramic</b>	Wax sealer post-install, regular cleansing	Grout damage from over-scrubbing	Restaurants, high-traffic floors

### THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT RULE

Always test any new cleanser on a small, hidden corner of a tile before applying it across the whole floor. The minute spent testing is the minute that prevents an irreversible mistake.

# For trade enquiries.

*For industry professionals and retail partners seeking to wholesale our products, please reach out using the details below. We supply to retail stores and industry professionals only.*

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