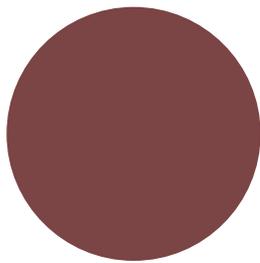
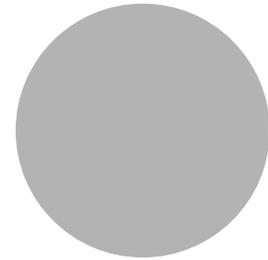
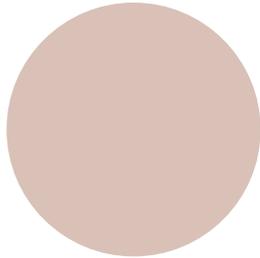
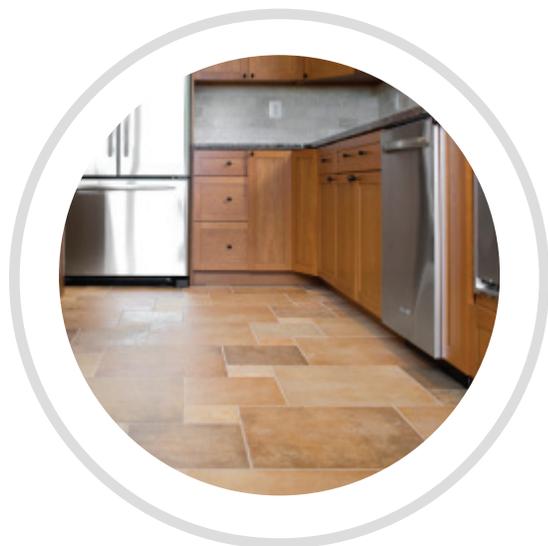


IMPROVEMENT CENTER



Guide to Tile Flooring

Guide to Tile Flooring



3. **Porcelain:** With a much harder surface, this tile is more scratch- and stain-resistant. The color permeates deeper into the tile than it does with glazed tiles.

Choose from a wide variety of surface textures, designs, colors, and sizes. Some companies now make tile with the appearance of marble, travertine, stone, and other natural finishes. Prices vary, depending on factors such as manufacturer, tile size, and finish.

You can achieve many looks with tile. Create dramatic effects with a complementary grout color and an interesting tile pattern. Jack-on-jack is a design featuring tiles laid like the squares on a checkerboard. A running bond pattern achieves an effect through offsetting lines of grout. You can also insert art tiles with striking designs at intervals to add interest to your floor.

One of the most beautiful and durable of flooring materials, tile offers easy maintenance as well as resistance to stains and water. Ceramic and porcelain tiles come in a wide variety of colors, sizes, shapes, and styles. Tile is one of the oldest flooring materials: Ceramic tile dates back over 4,000 years to the Egyptians, while the history of porcelain began in ancient China.

Styles and Finishes

Three major types of tile are available:

1. **Glazed:** This ceramic tile is coated with a stain and minerals that give it a hard, shiny surface. The surface texture can be high gloss, matte, or textured.
2. **Unglazed:** These tiles lack the hard coating of glazed products, and you can pick from a variety of textures and designs. Because of their relatively non-slip surface you can most frequently find them outdoors, in applications such as patios and porches.



Manufacture and Construction

Clay is the basic material of ceramic tiles, while porcelain tiles have feldspar mixed with the clay. The clay is shaped and dried, then fired in a kiln at high temperatures. Ceramic tiles use a two-step firing process, with colored "glaze" added in the second step.

Manufacturers fire porcelain at higher temperatures in one step, adding a coat of enamel to provide color. Porcelain's extreme firing temperatures result in tiles with a very hard, durable surface that is nearly impervious to staining, scratching, and water absorption. However, porcelain tiles become slightly distorted due to those temperatures, which may make them irregular in size.



Installation

If you choose to install your own ceramic tile flooring, be prepared for some exacting work. Make sure you have all your equipment before starting; you can decide if you need tools such as tile nippers or a wet saw.

1. Make sure your subfloor can bear the weight of the tile. The subfloor should be at least one inch thick.



2. See if the floor is level. You can generally lay tile over existing floor material if it is perfectly flat.
3. Select your pattern; jack-on-jack may be the easiest for beginners.
4. Measure the distances between the walls of the room, and start laying your tiles from the center, doing a dry layout before using any adhesive.
5. Leave space between the tiles for the grout, either by using plastic spacers or choosing tiles with built-in spacers.
6. Spread adhesive on the subfloor and begin to lay your tiles, removing any adhesive that oozes up between the tiles.
7. Stop every few rows and set the tiles into the adhesive with a leveler and a mallet before the adhesive hardens.
8. Cut tiles to fit around the edges of the room if necessary.
9. After the tile adhesive has set, apply the grout, smoothing it with a toothbrush.
10. Let the grout cure for a week and then seal it.

You can also hire a contractor to lay your tile. Some stores include the fees for installation in the price of the tile. The cost of professional installation varies, taking into consideration factors such as odd-shaped rooms where tiles have to be cut.

Care and Maintenance

Ceramic tile and grout should be sealed after installation. Once sealed, glazed ceramic and porcelain tile floors do not require special care. You can use a regular all-purpose household cleaner or a damp mop after sweeping or vacuuming the tiles.