

How to install handmade tile

This is a basic guide for the do it yourselfer who wants to install their own tiles

Tools/supplies needed

Sponge
Rubber gloves
Trowel
Toothbrush
Paper towels
Apron
Terry cloth or old rags
Rubber float for bigger projects
2 bowls or buckets
Large bristle brush
Clean water
Masking tape

Surface preparation

Prep the surface you are going to be installing the tiles on. Clean all surfaces with a dry towel. If it is a painted surface sand the surface down and clean thoroughly. Begin when fully dry.

Tile Surfaces

Concrete

Concrete is the best surface to adhere tile to, concrete can come in many forms for tile installations.

1. Poured concrete. Should have no sealers added to surface
2. Hardibacker ceramic tile backer board, comes in many different thicknesses, cuts like sheetrock can be bolted like sheetrock probably the most versatile concrete backer on the market
3. Duralock ceramic tile backer board comes in many different thicknesses. It can crumble when trying to cut like sheet rock. Very durable but not as easy to work with as hardibacker board.

Sheet rock

Unpainted Sheet Rock is the next best surface to adhere tile to.

Wood

Wood is not recommended to adhere tile to but can be done. Wood tends to warp, rot, and vibrate. All can cause your tile to separate from its installed surface.

Adhesives for setting tiles

Brands we recommend

TEC, Mapie, C-Cure

Adhesive in tile setting is called Mortar. It is a concrete based material. Mix adhesive into a creamy peanut butter mixture, get all the lumps out and let sit for a few minutes and mix one last time. Always wear gloves when working with the mortar; it is extremely sticky. Spread out mortar on surface and comb with a trowel to specified notch for size of tiles using. Mortar does not have a long working time so do not make up more than you can set in a 20 to 30 minute period.

When setting handmade tile one should butter back of tile. Typically Handmade tile is not perfectly flat and all parts of tile should be in contact with installation surface.

Warning - Don't ruin your plumbing by dumping any mortar or grout water down the sink. Always clean you hands, tools and buckets in a separate bucket with clean water in it. Then dump outside.

Silicon - Used for adhering tiles, mainly for small projects and specifically for glass tiles since it dries clear. Also if you plan to adhere tile to wood it would be recommended to use silicon. Comes in caulking tube dispensers.

PL 200 - good for adhering tiles to wood surfaces and small projects comes in caulking tube dispensers. Do not use for glass because it yellows and can change the color of the glass as light reflects through it.

Grout: the filler between tile joints

Grout is a concrete material used as filler between tile joints it is not an adhesive There are three types of grout :

Sanded Grout - used for joints larger than 3/16" most all-handmade tile needs to use this as its filler.

Unsanded Grout - used for joints smaller than 3/16" most commercial tiles uses this as its filler. Commercial tile tends to be straighter and has less warpage allowing the tiles to but up closer than handmade tiles can be.

Mix grout to a creamy peanut butter mixture, not too wet. Always leave out extra dry mixture to add in case mixture becomes too "runny". You can use either clean cool water or an additive to get to the correct consistency. For larger spaces we recommend a rubber float. For small projects with lots of

small tiles or dimensional tiles, use your hands. Always wear gloves.

Warning - Don't ruin your plumbing by dumping any mortar or grout water down the sink. Always clean your hands, tools and buckets in a separate bucket with clean water in it.

Epoxy grout - a newer grout please consult a distributor of tile materials for its best uses.

Installation Tips

Before you start any tile installation we recommend you lay out the design on a template. This allows you to see if you have all of the pieces you ordered, also see the natural variations of the tiles so you can place them next to other tiles with similar variations.

Mix your adhesive trowel mortar out in small sections and place tiles where you had planned to put them in your installation.

Let sit for at least 24 to 48 hours longer if possible, then you can grout the surface. Clean right away with a dry terry cloth or paper towels. Do not add more water to the grout it can cause the grout to crack and continue to smudge. Once cleaned let sit for 24 to 48 hours to cure.

A Sealer can be applied to the whole surface. Each sealer has a recommend time that one should apply to an installation, please refer to directions.