

Disclaimer: This document is a general reference guide for cleaning and maintaining Natural Stone tile. Stone generally requires more care & maintenance than non-porous surfaces, like porcelain, but is still easy to maintain. Always follow manufacturer recommendations for installing & maintaining products. If available, these are typically located in each box of tile and sometimes online. The following guide provides general information on the care and maintenance of natural stone tile. Please read the entire document so important details are not missed.

[Recommended cleaners can be viewed & purchased here.](#)

Natural Stone is one of the oldest forms of building materials and can last a lifetime if installed and cared for properly. Natural stone can be sealed, but even when it's not, a patina will develop gradually over time based on traffic and natural conditions. Some stones can be professionally restored if necessary, but this is not common. It is important to understand that not all natural stones are created equally, which means if you are troubleshooting a maintenance issue, you need to know what type of stone you are working with as well as the finish. Desired patina and surface texture plays a large role in scheduled maintenance and cleaning.

Sealing

Sealing is an essential step in protecting the beauty and ensuring the longevity of your stone, which preserves and in some cases enhances the appearance. Sealers provide stain resistance (not stain proofing), which allows for extra time to clean up potentially damaging spills by sealing micropores, and can help prevent etching.

- Test sealers prior to use, on a sample is preferred.
- We recommend sealing natural stone products with a penetrating sealer, not a topical one.
- Stone products should be sealed prior and after installation only when the grout is fully cured.
- Sealing prior to grouting prevents grout pigments from staining the surface, and will assist in the final installation cleaning.
- Sealing after installation (grout must be cured) will also seal the grout.
- Re-sealing should be done as needed depending on accumulated wear. A good indicator that it is time to re-seal is when water no longer beads on the surface of the stone, or you notice the stone darkening when wet. This could mean 6 months or maybe even 3 years - so be wary of blanket statements made on how often to re-seal. The resealing frequency will depend on traffic, use and regular cleaning cycle. Stone, like any other natural product, will age and patina, adding to its beauty and character.
- Never apply sealer over a stain.

General Tips

- Regularly inspect tiles and have any damaged tiles professionally removed/replaced if desired.
- Promptly wipe spills and clean with a damp cloth or sponge. Spills not cleaned up promptly may penetrate natural stone.
- Sweep and/or vacuum floors regularly to remove any dirt particles, dust or debris. Over time, buildup can be abrasive to the surface.
- Use felt or rubber protective pads under furniture to prevent scratching stone surfaces.
- Place good quality floor mats in high traffic locations and areas that are susceptible to moisture (ie. near entrance /exit ways). This is especially important for polished stones to decrease chances of slipping.
- Never use products that contain acids on marble, limestone, travertine, or onyx surfaces, including vinegar and lime juice, bleach, and ammonia.
- Never use abrasive cleaners, scouring pads/creams, or essential oils.
- Avoid "over the counter" stone care sprays that contain phosphoric and glycolic acids, as these may etch some polished stone surfaces.
- Only use products formulated for natural stone surfaces.
- Pressure washing is not recommended as part of routine maintenance. Consult a stone restoration company if you decide to pressure wash your stone.

Countertops

After sweeping away debris, clean stone surfaces with a few drops of neutral cleaner, stone soap, or a mild liquid dishwashing detergent and warm water.

1. Use a clean soft cloth for best results.
2. Too much cleaner or soap may leave a film and cause streaks.
3. Rinse the surface thoroughly after washing with the soap solution and dry with a soft cloth.

Floors

Dust mop interior floors frequently using a clean, non-treated dry dust mop. Sand, dirt, and grit do the most damage to natural stone surfaces due to their abrasiveness. Mats or area rugs inside and outside an entrance will help to minimize the sand, dirt, and grit that will scratch the stone floor. Be sure that the underside of the mat or rug is a non-slip surface. Normally, it will take a person about eight steps on a floor surface to remove sand or dirt from the bottom of their shoes. Normal maintenance involves periodic washing with clean, potable water and neutral (pH 7) cleaners. Soapless cleaners are preferred because they minimize streaks and film. Mild, phosphate-free, biodegradable liquid dishwashing soaps or powders or stone soaps are acceptable if rinsing is thorough.

1. Wet the stone surface with clean water.
2. Using the cleaning solution (following manufacturer's directions), wash in small, overlapping sweeps. Work from the bottom up if it is a vertical surface.
3. Rinse thoroughly with clean, potable water to remove all traces of soap or cleaner solution.
4. Change the water in the rinse pail frequently.
5. Dry with soft cloth and allow to thoroughly air dry.

Baths, Showers, and Wet Areas

Soap scum can be minimized by using a squeegee after each use. To remove soap scum, use a non-acidic soap scum remover or a solution of ammonia and water (about 1/2 cup ammonia to a gallon of water). Frequent or overuse of an ammonia solution may eventually dull the surface of the stone.

Outdoor Pool and Patio Areas

In outdoor pool, patio, or hot tub areas, flush with clear water and use a mild bleach solution to remove algae or moss.

Exterior

Large expanses of stone generally found on exterior applications may make it impractical to perform normal maintenance on a frequent basis. Large installations, however, should be given periodic overall cleaning as necessary to remove accumulated pollutants. Easily accessible stone surfaces such as steps, walkways, fountains, etc., should be kept free of debris and soiling by periodically sweeping and washing with water. Normal maintenance should include periodic inspection of stone surfaces for structural defects, movement, deterioration, or staining.

Troubleshooting

Oil-Based Stains (grease, tar, cooking oil, cosmetics) — Will darken the stone and normally must be chemically dissolved so the stain's source can be rinsed away. Clean gently with a soft liquid cleanser, household detergent, ammonia, mineral spirits, or acetone.

Organic Stains (coffee, tea, fruit, tobacco, paper, food, urine, leaves, bark, bird droppings)— May cause a pinkish-brown stain and may disappear after the source of the stain has been removed. Outdoors, with the sources removed, normal sun and rain action will generally bleach out the stains. Indoors, clean with 12% hydrogen peroxide and a few drops of ammonia.

Inorganic Metal Stains (iron, rust, copper, bronze) — Iron or rust stains are orange to brown in color and leave the shape of the staining object, such as nails, bolts, screws, cans, flowerpots, or metal furniture. Copper and bronze stains appear as green or muddy brown and result from the action of moisture on nearby or embedded bronze, copper, or brass items. Metal stains must be removed with a poultice. Deep-seated, rusty stains are extremely difficult to remove and the stone may be permanently stained.

Biological Stains (algae, mildew, lichens, moss, fungi) — Clean with a dilute (1/2 cup in a gallon of water) ammonia, bleach, or hydrogen peroxide. **WARNING: DO NOT MIX BLEACH AND AMMONIA - THIS COMBINATION CREATES A TOXIC GAS.**

Ink Stains (magic marker, pen, ink)—Clean light colored stones with bleach or hydrogen peroxide. Use lacquer thinner or acetone for dark-colored stones.

Paint Stains—Small amounts can be removed with lacquer thinner or scraped off carefully with a razor blade. Heavy paint coverage should be removed with a commercial liquid paint stripper. **DO NOT USE ACIDS OR FLAME TOOLS TO STRIP PAINT FROM STONE.**

Water Spots and Rings (surface accumulation of hard water) — Buff with dry 0000 steel wool.

Fire and Smoke Damage — Older stones and smoke- or fire-stained fireplaces may require a thorough cleaning to restore their original appearance. Commercially available smoke removal products may save time and effort.

Etch Marks — Calcium-based stones etch more easily. Etch marks are caused by acids (typically from milk, fruit juices, wine, etc.) left on the surface of the stone, some will etch the finish but not leave a stain; others will both etch and stain. Once the stain has been removed, wet the surface with clear water and sprinkle with marble polishing powder. Rub the powder into the stone with a damp cloth or by using a buffing pad with a low speed power drill or polisher. Continue buffing until the etch mark disappears and the marble surface shines. Honing may be required for deep etching. This process may require the services of a stone restoration professional.

White Residue — Test the surface by attempting to scrape it off. Use a nylon pan scraper or a razor blade to carefully scrape the residue. If it can be easily removed, then you are dealing with dried products (soaps, cleaning products, shampoo, oils) on the stone. The shavings will either be soapy when water is introduced or oily if it is conditioner, lotions, or hair treatments. If shavings can be scraped it may be an accumulation of soaps, cleaning products, or hard water build up. If the white residue is powdery, it's likely efflorescence.

Product Buildup — This is a common problem that occurs when stone is not regularly cleaned or not cleaned properly. Stonetech soapstone remover is recommended for cleaning.

Hard Water Buildup — Hard water deposits can be scraped away, but only with significantly more difficulty. Stonetech soapstone remover is recommended for cleaning.

Efflorescence — A white powder that may appear on the surface of the stone that is caused by water carrying mineral salts from below the surface of the stone to the surface which has evaporated. When the water evaporates, it leaves the powdery salt residue. Typically efflorescence is a minor inconvenience that can be remedied without having to replace the stone. If the installation is new, dust mop or vacuum the powder. Repeat as necessary as the stone dries out. If the installation is not fresh, follow regular cleaning procedures and use a Stonetech specialty product if available (check the list of approved stones first as calcium based stones can etch if you use the wrong chemicals). If the problem persists, periodic professional cleaning may be required. When the efflorescence is unable to be treated, a bigger problem underneath the stone may be present (moisture in the substrate). A professional stone restoration company will need to be consulted in this case to determine viability of restoration or replacement.