

Tile & Stone Floor Cleaning Guide

NORMAL DAY-TO-DAY CARE

The following provides the basic guidelines for you to follow to help you maintain your tile and stone floor. These guidelines apply to glazed ceramic and porcelain tile as well as natural stone (marble, travertine, limestone, slate, granite, and similar materials), with notes below on where the two need different care.

There are three key aspects to maintaining your tile and stone floor.

1. Frequent, thorough sweeping or vacuuming.
2. Prompt clean-up of spills.
3. Periodic professional care, sealing, and grout maintenance.

All the information on this page is provided so that you can maintain and enjoy your tile and stone floor for years to come.

SWEEPING & MOPPING

The most important thing you can do to keep your tile and stone floor looking great is to sweep or vacuum it frequently, particularly in high-traffic areas. Loose grit acts like sandpaper underfoot and can scratch glazed tile or dull polished stone. For best results, use a soft-bristle broom, a dust mop, or a vacuum with a hard-floor attachment (never a beater bar). Mop periodically with a pH-neutral cleaner made for tile or stone, using a well-wrung mop rather than flooding the floor — excess water can seep into grout lines and, on natural stone, into the pores of the stone itself. Rinse the mop and change the water often so you aren't spreading dirty water back onto the floor.

A NOTE ON NATURAL STONE

Natural stone such as marble, travertine, and limestone is calcium-based and reacts with acids — even mild ones like vinegar, citrus juice, and many everyday all-purpose cleaners will etch and dull the surface, leaving a permanently dull spot that cleaning cannot fix. Use only cleaners labeled safe for natural stone, and keep the floor properly sealed; a sealer helps stone resist stains and moisture but needs periodic reapplication (typically every 1-2 years, depending on the stone and traffic). Glazed ceramic and porcelain tile is far more chemical-resistant and generally does not need sealing, though unglazed tile and grout usually do.

BASIC CLEANING STEPS FOR CLEANING COMMON FOOD AND BEVERAGE STAINS

The following "Basic Cleaning Steps" (BCS) are recommended for sealed tile and stone flooring.

What You Will Need

- Clean, soft, absorbent cloths or paper towels
- A soft-bristle brush (for grout lines and stubborn residue)

- 1 qt of warm water
- A few drops of a pH-neutral cleaner labeled safe for tile or, if applicable, natural stone

Here's How To Clean Your Floor

1. Immediately scoop or blot up as much of the spill as possible. Then blot, do not rub, with a clean, absorbent cloth or paper towel to remove excess moisture.
2. Most stains clean up with warm, not hot, water applied to the stained area. Then blot with a clean cloth or paper towel, pressing down firmly to remove as much moisture as possible.
3. If the stain remains, make a solution of warm water and a pH-neutral cleaner (1 tsp to 1 qt water) — choose one labeled safe for natural stone if that's what you have. Using a clean cloth or soft brush, apply enough solution to cover the stain and let it sit for about 5 minutes; work gently into grout lines if needed.
4. IMPORTANT: Rinse thoroughly with clean water and blot dry using a clean cloth. Repeat until all cleaner residue is removed — leftover residue can leave a dull film, and on unsealed stone or grout can attract dirt over time.
5. Dry the area with a clean towel to prevent water spots, especially on polished stone.
6. Once dry, sweep or dust mop to remove any loosened debris.

Reappearing Stains: On natural stone, a stain that fades but keeps reappearing may have soaked into the pores below the surface. If so, a poultice (an absorbent paste that draws the stain out) may be needed — this is best handled by, or with guidance from, a stone care professional.

CLEANING OTHER KINDS OF STAINS

The following guidelines refer to stains from substances other than food and beverages. Identifying the source of the stain is the key to successful removal. Since different stains require different cleaning procedures, any spill should be cleaned up immediately — this matters even more on natural stone, where acidic or pigmented liquids can etch or stain the surface within minutes. While the substances below usually can be cleaned up successfully with prompt, proper steps, deep or old stains on stone, and stains that have penetrated grout, may require professional cleaning or resealing.

Stain Key

Substance	Key
Alcohol (spirits)	E
Asphalt/tar	A
Blood	B
Candle wax	D
Chewing gum	D

Chocolate/candy	B
Coffee/tea	G
Cosmetics/makeup	A
Crayon	A
Dirt/mud	H
Efflorescence (white haze)	C
Fruit juice	G
Grease/cooking oil	A
Ink	G
Lipstick	A
Nail polish	F
Oil (motor/machine)	A
Paint (latex)	B
Paint (oil-based)	A
Pet urine	C
Rust	C
Shoe polish	A
Soda/soft drink	B
Tomato sauce	G
Vomit	G
Water spots/hard-water film	C
Wine	G

CLEANING PROCEDURES

Basic Cleaning Steps (BCS) Key

A. Follow BCS no. 1. Then apply a dry-cleaning solvent or mineral spirits to a cloth (never pour directly on the floor) and blot. Follow instructions and precautions on the container, and test on an inconspicuous area of natural stone first. Then follow BCS no. 2-6.

B. Follow BCS no. 1-3, then apply a solution of clear, white, non-suds ammonia (2 tbs. to 1 qt water) — glazed tile and grout only; do not use ammonia on natural stone. Blot with a clean cloth. Repeat BCS no. 3-6.

C. For rust, hard-water film, or efflorescence, avoid acidic cleaners on natural stone entirely. Use a cleaner and, if needed, a rust remover labeled specifically safe for stone; on glazed tile and grout, a diluted acidic cleaner may be used with care. When in doubt, or if the mark doesn't lift, consult a professional rather than experimenting with stronger acids.

D. Harden wax or gum by holding an ice cube in a plastic bag against it briefly. Gently scrape away the hardened residue with a plastic scraper — never a metal blade on natural stone or glazed surfaces, which can scratch them. Then follow BCS no. 2-6.

E. Dampen a cloth with a small amount of rubbing alcohol and blot the stain gently — never pour it on the floor. Test in an inconspicuous area of natural stone first. Then follow BCS no. 4-6.

F. Test a small amount of non-acetone nail polish remover on an inconspicuous area — acetone can dull sealers and etch some stone. If safe, dampen a cloth and blot. Then follow BCS no. 3-6.

G. Follow BCS no. 1-4 using a pH-neutral, stone-safe cleaner — do NOT use vinegar or other acidic solutions on natural stone, as they will etch the surface. On glazed tile, a diluted vinegar solution may be used instead if preferred. If the stain remains on stone, a poultice may be needed. Repeat BCS no. 3-6.

H. Sweep or vacuum thoroughly. If needed, follow BCS no. 1-6.

NOTE: If these procedures do not work, consult a professional tile and stone cleaner. Always test any cleaning solution on an inconspicuous area first, and never use vinegar, lemon juice, or other acidic cleaners, abrasive powders, or steel wool on natural stone — they can permanently etch or scratch the surface. Reseal natural stone periodically per the sealer manufacturer's recommendations.