



TILE | GARAGE DOORS | FIREPLACES | BRICK



TILE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is ceramic tile?

Ceramic tiles are made of clay and quartz ferrous sand materials, along with water. Once the tiles are formed they are fired to high temperatures. In some cases, their surfaces are glazed.

Are ceramic products more or less expensive than other flooring materials?

Ceramic tile is competitively priced, particularly when you consider the total cost of materials, installation, maintenance and possible repairs or replacements. In fact, ceramic tile is often the most economical choice for floor, wall and façade covering.

What are the advantages of glazed ceramics?

The beauty and variety in color, design and decoration available in glazed tiles has always been one of the most valued qualities of ceramic products. The glaze also makes cleaning easier.

Glazed porcelain tile combines the aesthetic qualities and easy care of ceramic tiles with the durability and surface hardness of its vitrified porcelain body. Suitable for both commercial and domestic applications, glazed porcelain tile can be used indoor as well as out.

Can ceramic tile be used outdoors?

To be used outdoors, the tile must be frostproof, unglazed and have a highly textured surface for slip resistance. Make sure the absorption rate is 0.5% or less. (This will differ depending on the climate and weather patterns of your location.)

How does ceramic tile differ from porcelain tile?

The only difference between porcelain tile and regular ceramic tile is that the clay used to make porcelain tile is more highly refined and purified. Consequently, porcelain tiles are denser than standard ceramic tiles.

“Ceramic” or non-porcelain tiles are generally made from red or white clay fired in a kiln. They are almost always finished with a durable glaze that creates the color and pattern. These tiles are used in both wall and floor applications, are softer and easier to cut than porcelain, and usually carry a PEI 0 to 3 rating. Typically suitable for very light to moderate traffic areas, they have a relatively high water absorption rating. This makes them less frost resistant and more prone to wear and chipping than porcelain tiles.

Porcelain tile is typically made by the dust pressed method from porcelain clay, resulting in a tile that is dense, impervious, fine grained and smooth, with a sharply formed face. Porcelain tiles usually have a much lower water absorption rate (less than 0.5%) than non-porcelain tiles, making them frost resistant or frost-proof. Glazed porcelain tiles are much harder and consequently, are more wear and damage resistant than non-porcelain ceramic tiles, making them suitable for any application from light traffic to the heaviest residential and light commercial traffic. Full body porcelain tiles carry the color and pattern through the entire thickness of the tile making them virtually impervious to wear and suitable for any application from residential to the highest traffic commercial or industrial applications. Porcelain tiles are available in matte, unglazed or high polished finishes.

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Is porcelain tile really stronger than ceramic tile?

Ceramic tile is constructed using red, brown or white clay. Porcelain tile, however, is constructed using white clay. As a result of being made from more refined clay, porcelain tiles are more durable, making them ideal for harsher applications such as commercial or outdoor flooring. Also, because of their higher density, porcelain tiles are less likely to absorb moisture (0.5%), making them more durable and resistant to staining. Porcelain tiles are frequently found in floor applications, outdoor areas and in cold weather climates where freezing can occur. With their low absorption capability they are less likely to crack in cold weather climates.

Porcelain tile costs a little more than the traditional, more porous, standard clay tile. However, prices have been coming down in recent years.

Do I need to use a sealer on ceramic or porcelain tile?

Glazed ceramic tiles and porcelain tiles do not need to be sealed. On the other hand, most unglazed tiles DO need to be sealed. Always check the manufacturer's recommendation before proceeding. Note that natural stone such as marble, granite and limestone DO need to be sealed before grouting.

Should I seal unglazed porcelain tile?

There is no recommendation that ALL unglazed porcelain be sealed. However, much unglazed porcelain benefits from being sealed, especially when installed in food service or high traffic areas. The only way to determine whether sealer necessary is to test: 1) Expose the tile to liquid food contaminants for several hours, then remove the contaminants and clean with a neutral pH cleaner; or 2) Soil a test area by rubbing with common dirt contaminants, followed by immediate cleaning with a neutral pH cleaner. A premium penetrating sealer can prevent staining in those tiles that show stains after testing.

Both Aqua Mix [link to site] "Ultra-Solv" and "Sealer's Choice Gold" work well, but "Ultra-Solv" allows for an easier application process because it is composed of smaller molecules than "Sealer's Choice". Aqua Mix recommends sealing the tile with one coat prior to grouting and a second coat after grouting. This assures the tile is properly sealed as well as the grout being sealed.

Do ceramic and porcelain tile negatively affect the environment?

No. Manufacturer recycling of production energy and waste materials is non-landfill burdening. These tiles are often made of renewable, plentiful raw materials.

What are the advantages of porcelain tile?

Porcelain tile is available in a wide range of colors and textures. It comes in options that accurately replicate the look of natural stone, granite, slate, travertine, limestone, marble, quartzite, terracotta and even wood and metal. The wide range of styles, low maintenance care and hard-wearing technical properties make this tile a very attractive choice for various applications.

What is the difference between wall and floor tile?

There are a number of differences between wall and floor tiles. Wall tiles can range from being very smooth and shiny to having uneven, highly-textured or even rough finishes--both of which would make them inappropriate for use on a floor. In general, floor tiles have some texture in order to promote traction and safety for walking and are thicker than wall tiles in order to withstand the weight of furniture and foot traffic. Finally, unlike wall tiles, floor tiles must be waterproof.

When selecting any ceramic tile it is important to look at the "PEI", or scratch resistance factor.

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In The Hamilton Parker Company showroom, tiles are rated from 1 to 5.

- 1**= Ideal for walls.
- 2**= Best for bathrooms and kitchens.
- 3**= Appropriate for all residential applications.
- 4**= Appropriate for commercial applications.
- 5**= Appropriate for heavy commercial applications.

What are the benefits of tile over other floor coverings?

There are many benefits to tile as a flooring option:

- Safe – slip resistant
- Non-conductive – will not produce a shock
- An aid to insulation
- Mechanically, one of the strongest surfacing materials
- Will not absorb odors--smoke, paint fumes and other contaminants do not linger
- No fibers, gases or toxic by-products when installing ceramic tile
- Is chemically inert and inhibits the growth of mold, fungus and other viruses, improving air quality

What is the difference between glazed and full-body tiles?

Glazed tiles are coated with a liquid glass, which is baked into the surface of the clay. The glaze provides an unlimited array of colors and designs as well as protection from staining. Unglazed tiles are the same as glazed tiles, except their surface is not coated. Full-body porcelain tiles do not show wear because their color extends throughout the entire thickness of the tile, making them ideal for commercial applications.

What kind of tile should I have for a steam room and its ceiling? What would be the differences among ceramic, porcelain and tumbled stone for use in a steam room?

Some tiles are better suited than others for the extreme conditions present in a steam room. A porcelain or ceramic tile is the best choice. These tiles have a low absorption rate and hold up well under moist conditions. They can be used on all surfaces, including the ceiling.

When choosing between these two options, note that porcelain is generally considered slightly more durable because it is made of a harder material than ceramic. In some cases, porcelain tile can also be installed with a very narrow grout joint, a favorable feature due to the high moisture content in a steam shower. However, both ceramic and porcelain are very good choices.

Conversely, tumbled or natural stone such as marble, travertine, limestone, granite, or slate, absorbs too much moisture to be recommended for steam room use. Once moisture enters the stone, it creates ideal conditions for the growth of mold and mildew. Even when sealed, these products are a poor choice for a steam room. However, many ceramic and porcelain tiles have styles that replicate the look of tumbled stone, providing a good alternative.

What type of tile is best to resurface a cement porch in Central Ohio?

There are only a few tiles approved for use in exposed areas due to the slip resistance required and the durability necessary to hold up to the freeze-thaw cycle of the colder months. Among tiles rated for exterior use, one type is no better than the other. Ultimately, it comes down to personal preference.

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One option is an unglazed quarry paver tile, with a look and texture similar to terra cotta. Smooth brick is another choice. Another option is natural Vermont slate, a type of slate that does not have the range of color or clefted texture of a more traditional slate. This material is fairly consistent from piece to piece and has a smooth texture, but it does differ from the typical appearance of slate.

Do you carry marble tile in the 12"x12" size? Does marble have matching bullnose?

We carry many marble tile options, as well as other natural stones, in 12x12. In regard to the bullnose, The Hamilton Parker Company offers bullnose service at our Columbus location. [\[link\]](#)

Typically bullnose is not used with natural stone because the color is consistent throughout, i.e. there is no different tile body color to cover--like there is with ceramic tile--so technically a bullnose is not necessary. More typically, the exposed edge is polished so it matches the surface of the marble, or stone enhancer can be applied to the exposed edge to create a color match. This will not produce a polished finish like the surface, but will eliminate the dusty white appearance on the unfinished edges of the tile.

Choosing Tile for a Fireplace

When selecting tile for a fireplace, the critical issue is that the tile is made to withstand high temperatures and flames. There are many styles and sizes to choose from: Tiling your fireplace is an opportunity to imprint your signature style and bring design home!

In addition to enhancing the appearance of your fireplace, decorative tiles also allow for quick and efficient clean-up while looking good and being more functional at the same time.

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