TILE & STONE INSTALLATION
PROJECT GUIDE

Four easy steps to a quality tile installation

Custom Confidence

Rely on our 50 years of manufacturing experience, product innovation, and customer service to ensure your project is a success. For help or questions along the way, please call us or visit our website.

Lifetime Warranties

For Tile or Stone Installation Systems over Concrete Floors or Backerboard.

You will qualify for this limited warranty by using Custom's complete system of specified products including surface preparation, setting and grouting materials. Then, simply follow our installation instructions.

No application to fill out, no registration form – just hold on to your receipts. Nothing could be simpler.

See Custom's Lifetime Warranty brochure, call Customer Support, or visit our website for complete installation requirements.

Best Quality Tools

For long lasting tile, stone and floor covering installations use SuperiorBilt® tools.

Customer Support 800-272-8786

www.custombuildingproducts.com

Various installation photographs provided by Daltile.

1 PREP

2 SET

3 GROUT

4 CARE

Custom Building Products gives you four easy steps to a quality tile installation

1. Preparing your surface
2. Setting the tile
3. Grouting the tile joints
4. Caring for your installation

This is a basic guide to outline the steps, materials and tools to help in tile and stone installation. Use our checklists to be sure you have all the right tools and materials for your project.

Project Specs

Fill in the details of your job for later reference.

TILE SIZE	GROUT JOINT SIZE	JOB SIZE (IN SQ. FT.)

1

PREPARING THE SURFACE

Preparing the existing surface is the most critical task of any tile or stone installation. The tile must be placed on a rigid, level, structurally-sound surface to avoid problems. The surface should always be clean, dry and free of contaminants that could prevent a good bond.

Preparing Countertops

STEP 1
• Properly prepared laminate countertops or plywood subtops can be tiled over directly.
• For existing laminate countertops, use T.S.P. (or T.S.P. Substitute) for cleaning surfaces prior to tiling, then roughen with coarse sandpaper.

STEP 2
• Using a 1/4" x 1/4" x 1/4" square-notch trowel, apply VersaBond® Fortified Thin-Set Mortar to countertop.

STEP 3
• Place 1/4" or 1/2" WonderBoard® panels, with label side down on fresh mortar.
• Anchor WonderBoard with concrete backer-board screws.

PREP TIPS
• *For optimal performance and protection, tile only on Wonder-Board® Concrete Backerboard, concrete subfloors or drywall (in dry areas).*

Preparing Walls in Dry Areas

STEP 1
• For drywall, clean surface and remove all residue. Paint must be sanded lightly. Remove dust with a damp sponge.
• Properly prepared drywall can be tiled over directly.

STEP 2
• For wood studs fasten 1/2" WonderBoard panels to studs using concrete backerboard screws.

STEP 3
• Fill gaps between WonderBoard panels and corners with VersaBond then embed 2″ wide fiberglass mesh tape and smooth with a trowel.

Preparing Bathtub Walls

STEP 1
• Nail or staple 15 lb. roofing felt to studs. Starting at the bottom of the wall, run paper horizontally overlapping the top sheet over the bottom sheet 6" as you progress up the wall.

STEP 2
• Fasten 1/2" Wonder-Board panels to wood studs using concrete backerboard screws.

STEP 3
• Fill gaps between WonderBoard panels and corners with VersaBond then embed 2" wide fiberglass mesh tape and smooth with a trowel.

Preparing Wood Subfloors

STEP 1

- Using a 1/4" x 1/4" x 1/4" square-notch trowel, apply VersaBond® Fortified Thin-Set Mortar to subfloor.

STEP 2

- Place 1/4" or 1/2" WonderBoard panels, with label side down on fresh mortar.

STEP 3

- Anchor WonderBoard with concrete backer-board screws.

DETAILS

- *WonderBoard is water resistant and can be installed anywhere. See the WonderBoard Installation Guide for complete installation details.*

Preparing Uneven Concrete Subfloors

STEP 1

- Brush or roll on LevelQuik™ Latex Primer to prepare the surface.

STEP 2

- To level the floor, start in the lowest area and pour LevelQuik® RS Self-Leveling Underlayment. This product will flow to seek its own level.

STEP 3

- Smooth edges with a trowel.

Preparing Concrete Subfloors

STEP 1

- If concrete is porous, clean, even and in structurally sound condition, you can set tile directly over the concrete.
- To patch cracks, fill gaps, smooth surfaces, or to follow sloped surfaces allowing for water run-off, use SpeedFinish™ Patching & Finishing Compound.

STEP 2

- Apply RedGard® for waterproofing and to protect against cracks.

☐ **WonderBoard® Concrete Backerboard** Number of panels: ___

☐ **VersaBond® Fortified Thin-Set Mortar** Number of bags: ___

☐ Concrete backerboard screws

☐ Scoring knife

☐ 5 Gallon buckets

☐ 1/4" x 1/4" x 1/4" Square-notch trowel

☐ Tape measure

☐ Layout square

☐ Grease pencil

☐ Chalk line/Chalk

FOR BATHTUB WALLS

☐ 15 lb. Roofing felt

FOR CONCRETE SUBFLOORS

☐ **RedGard® Waterproofing and Anti-Fracture Membrane**

FOR UNEVEN CONCRETE SUBFLOORS

☐ **LevelQuik™ Latex Primer**

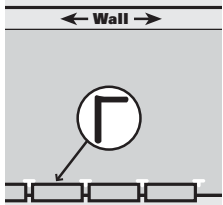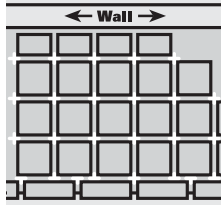☐ **LevelQuik® RS Rapid Setting Self-Leveling Underlayment**
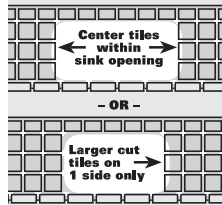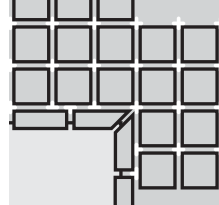
Countertops

1. Begin layout by positioning the front edge tiles (bullnose or v-cap) along the front of the countertop.

2. Do a dry run by placing as many full tiles on the countertop with spacers as necessary. If countertop abuts a wall, lay cut tiles against the wall.

Center tiles within sink opening
*– OR –*
Larger cut tiles on 1 side only

3. For straight countertops, mark centerline of countertop or sink, then lay tiles so cut pieces beside sink are the same width. Avoid less than half-width cut tiles by shifting the layout 1/2 tile left or right.
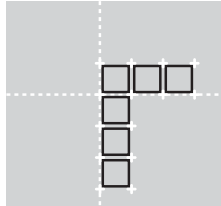
4. For L-shaped countertops, lay full tiles at inside corner. Set bullnose or v-cap pieces in place to ensure correct amount of overhanging pieces.
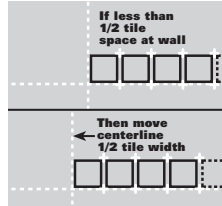
Walls
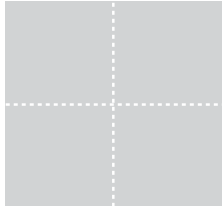
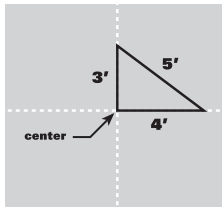**1.** Mark centerlines of the wall with a china marker.

2. To determine tile placement and cuts, lay it out on the floor first, placing a row of tiles along each line using spacers. Then replicate the measurements on the wall.
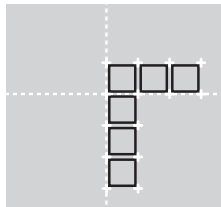
If less than 1/2 tile space at wall
Then move centerline 1/2 tile width

3. If the space at the wall end is less than 1/2 tile, shift centerline to eliminate small cuts. This will allow wide, even tiles at both edges.
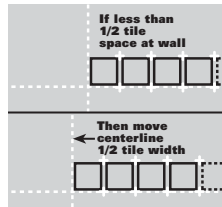
Floors

1. Mark centerlines of the floor. Use a 3-4-5 triangle to check for square.

3' 5' 4' center

2. Do a dry run to determine tile placement and cuts. Place a row of tiles along each line using spacers.

If less than 1/2 tile space at wall
Then move centerline 1/2 tile width

3. If the space at the wall is less than 1/2 tile, shift centerline to eliminate small cuts. This will allow wider tiles at both walls.
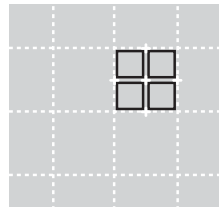
4. Work in chalked grids (typically 2 tiles by 2 tiles) allowing space for grout joints.

Cutting

1. After setting your full tiles, go back to set tiles requiring cuts. Mark cuts with a grease pencil or china marker.
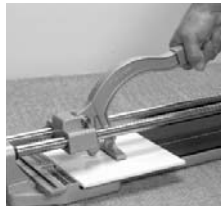
2. Make straight cuts using tile cutter or wet saw. Notched or curved cuts and v-cap or quarter round tile cuts require a wet saw.

3. For unique shaping, use tile nippers to cut away small pieces of tile.

WET SAWS
For precise cuts on stone and large tile.

TILE CUTTERS
For straight scoring and cutting of tile.

TILE NIPPERS
For breaking away small pieces and edges of tile.

HOLE SAWS
For cutting small circles.

SUPERIORBILT.

2

SETTING THE TILE

Creating a strong bond is an essential part of tile installation. In areas that may be exposed to water or heavy usage, we recommend using a polymer-modified thin-set mortar.

Tools & Materials Checklist

☐ **FlexBond® Fortified Thin-Set Mortar** Number of Bags: ___

OR

☐ **Marble & Granite Fortified Premium Mortar** for setting all types of stone. Number of Bags: ___

☐ Tile
☐ Mixer
☐ Knee pads
☐ Notch trowel
☐ Tile spacers
☐ Scrub pads
☐ Sponge
☐ Bucket of rinse water
☐ Cheesecloth

CERAMIC TILE ADHESIVE

☐ **OmniGrip® Ultimate Tile Adhesive** for superior bond strength in a lightweight adhesive.

STEP 1
- Clear all debris from surface.
- Mix thin-set mortar according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Spread thin-set mortar on surface with a notch trowel held at a 45˚ angle combing in one direction.

SET TIPS
- *Notch trowel size depends on the tile type and size. Larger tile require a deeper thin-set bed to make up for the minor adjustments in flatness of the floor and tile.*
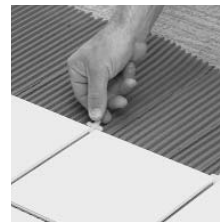
STEP 2
- Set tile firmly into place while slightly moving the tile back and forth to help tile settle. If tiling a wall, ensure the first row is level before adding more rows.

SET TIPS
- *Check for complete coverage by pulling up one tile. Mortar should cover at least 80% of the back of the tile.*

STEP 3
- Use spacers to ensure proper distance between tiles.

SET TIPS
- *Some wall tile have lugs for spacing, eliminating the need for spacers.*

STEP 4
- Clean off any mortar left between the tiles or on the surface of the tile with a sponge or scrub pad.

SET TIPS
- *Clean out as much mortar from the grout joints as you can; this will make it easier to grout.*
- *Tile installation should cure at least 24 hours before applying grout.*

Thin-Set Mortars

TILE/STONE SIZE	SQUARE-NOTCH TROWEL SIZE	COVERAGE*
Up to 8"	1/4" x 1/4" x 1/4"	90
8" – 12"	1/4" x 3/8" x 1/4"	60
12" and larger	1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2"	45
		PER 50 LB. BAG (IN SQ. FT.)

Use white thin-set mortars with white, translucent tile or light colors. Otherwise use gray thin-set mortars.

* All Custom® thin-set mortars provide approximately the same coverage per 50 lb. bag

Ceramic Tile Adhesives

TILE SIZE	TROWEL SIZE	COVERAGE
Up to 6"	3/16" x 5/32" V-Notch	60
6" – 12"	1/4" x 1/4" x 1/4" Square-Notch	40
12" – 16"	1/4" x 3/8" x 1/4" Square-Notch	30
		PER 1 GAL. PAIL (IN SQ. FT.)

Use OmniGrip for 12" – 16" tiles. See package for areas of use.

3

GROUTING THE TILE JOINTS

Polyblend® Grouts are easy to use, just add water and mix. Choose from 48 impressive colors to match your style.

STEP 1

- Using cool, clean water mix the grout to a lump-free, non-pourable consistency.

GROUT TIPS
- Remove spacers.
- Porous stone or tile can be stained by grout during installation. Pre-seal before grouting to make grout residue removal easier.

STEP 2

- Using a grout float, held at a 45˚ angle, spread Polyblend® Grout firmly into tile joints.

GROUT TIPS
- Make sure grout joints are completely filled.

STEP 3

- Allow grout to set for 10-20 minutes then lightly clean tile and shape grout joints with a damp sponge.
- Use a damp, not wet, sponge for best results.

GROUT TIPS
- Use clean water and grout sponge changing water frequently.
- Minimal clean-up water should be used to ensure proper grout curing and maintain color uniformity.

STEP 4

- Buff off remaining grout haze with a clean, dry cheesecloth after grout has dried for about 2 hours.
- Let grout dry 48–72 hours prior to sealing.

DETAILS

- Choose the perfect grout color to match your style. Use the Grout Colors brochure for a complete color selection guide.

Tools & Materials Checklist

- ☐ **Polyblend® Grout Non-Sanded** for joints less than 1/8" wide **Sanded** for joints 1/8"-1/2" wide. Number of Bags: ___
- ☐ Tile spacer remover
- ☐ Margin trowel
- ☐ Grout float
- ☐ Grout sponge designed for grouting tile
- ☐ Bucket of rinse water
- ☐ Heavy-duty grout gloves
- ☐ Cheesecloth
- ☐ **Polyblend® Ceramic Tile Caulk** for use around sinks, showers etc.
- ☐ **Polyblend® Grout Renew** all-in-one colorant and sealer

Polyblend® Sanded Grout
For grouting joints from 1/8" to 1/2"

TILE SIZE	JOINT WIDTH		
	1/8"	3/16"	1/4"
3" x 3" x 1/4"	150	105	80
6" x 6" x 1/4"	265	180	140
8" x 8" x 3/8"	230	155	115
12" x 12" x 3/8"	345	230	175
16" x 16" x 3/8"	460	305	225
	APPROX. COVERAGE PER 25 LB. BAG (IN SQ. FT.)		

Polyblend® Non-Sanded Grout
For grouting joints up to 1/8"

TILE SIZE	JOINT WIDTH	
	1/16"	1/8"
2" x 2" x 1/4"	85	40
4 1/4" x 4 1/4" x 1/4"	145	70
6" x 6" x 1/4"	125	60
8" x 8" x 3/8"	220	110
12" x 12" x 3/8"	330	170
	PER 10 LB. BOX (IN SQ. FT.)	

Saltillo Grout
For grouting joints from 3/4" to 1 1/4"

TILE SIZE	JOINT WIDTH	
	3/4"	1"
8" x 8" x 3/4"	37	30
12" x 12" x 3/8"	55	40
	PER 50 LB. BAG (IN SQ. FT.)	

4

CARING FOR YOUR INSTALLATION

Following proper maintenance techniques will keep your stone, grout and tile looking like new. TileLab® cleaners and sealers are specifically, safely formulated for stone, tile or grout.

Sealing

STEP 1

- Wait 48-72 hours after installation to seal.

CARE TIPS

- *Even if your tile is glazed, the grout can get stained and needs to be sealed.*

STEP 2

- Apply TileLab® SurfaceGard® Penetrating Sealer with a sponge, foam applicator or sealer applicator.

CARE TIPS

- *TileLab penetrating sealers act as invisible protection by repelling dirt and stains making clean-up easier.*
- *Sealing stone or grout after installation ensures future maintenance is quick & easy.*

STEP 3

- Test sealed surfaces for effectiveness every year. Sprinkle water on the surface at various locations, if it penetrates then renew by applying one coat of sealer.

CARE TIPS

- *Finishing sealers provide a protective sealer to resist stains, dirt or grease.*

DETAILS

- *See the TileLab Marble & Stone brochure or TileLab Grout & Tile brochure for complete sealing and cleaning product details.*

Cleaning

FOR EVERYDAY CLEANING

- TileLab OneStep™ Cleaner & Resealer contains SurfaceGard to seal as it cleans.

FOR TOUGH CLEANING

- Remove acrylic and wax floor finishes or light grout haze and residue with Heavy-Duty Cleaner & Stripper.

FOR MARBLE & STONE

- Add shine and luster to all stone types with ready-to-use Marble & Stone Cleaner.

Problem Solving

GROUT HAZE REMOVER

- Removes grout haze or thin-set residue.

STAIN REMOVER

- Removes deep-set stains without scrubbing.

Tools & Materials Checklist

- ☐ **TileLab® SurfaceGard® Penetrating Sealer** for high traffic areas, food prep areas, or stone installations

- ☐ **TileLab® Stone Enhancer & Sealer** to deepen or enrich the stone's color

- ☐ Sealer applicator, sponge or foam brush

- ☐ **TileLab® OneStep™ Cleaner & Resealer** for everyday cleaning

- ☐ **Heavy-Duty Cleaner & Stripper**

- ☐ **Marble & Stone Cleaner**

- ☐ **Grout & Tile Cleaner**