

ROKWELL.BIZ MAINTENANCE TIPS

Ceramic Tile Floor Care and Maintenance

As many people know, caring for a tile floor is different from other flooring surfaces. For one, tile typically has a very delicate finish, which can be scratched by brittle bristle brushes, scouring pads or steel wool and harsh abrasive chemical agents. Another area of quandary is the grout finish on tile floors; how do you get stains out of grout? The answers to these questions coincide with one of tile floor's nicest qualities: its resiliency to staining. And while the grout may be porous and slightly more susceptible to staining, a few procedures can make your floor almost totally stain proof.

When your floor tiles leave the factory, they have been through a barrage of treatments. In their initial stage as molten clay, aluminum powder may have been added to strengthen the tiles. Next, they may have been treated with a glaze to add a layer of protection and enhance their appearance. From there, your tiles were fired to immensely high temperatures, essentially cooking the tile, and further sealing the glaze. Finally, your tile is treated to a sealer which will protect it, both in transit to your home and then again once it's set in place in your home.

All these steps have been put in place to insure that your tile floor looks its best for as long as possible. Now it's your turn to continue that maintenance, and prolong the life your floor indefinitely. A solution of mild soap and water applied the surface of the tile on a regular basis is generally enough to keep your floor clean and looking its best. But from time to time, depending on the level of household traffic, it may be necessary to spruce your floor up with a few readily available treatments.

Removing Stains from Tile

Some people complain about stains on their tile floors from kitchen mishaps. These stains can imbed themselves in the porous finish of some manufactured tile. Bleach can be used in most cases to remove some of the nastier, deeper stains, but where bleach does not reach, what can you do? Many household tile cleaners make great claims about removing deeply saturated stains or hard water marks from tile. The fact is, most miss the mark when compared to the time honored method of diluted muriatic acid.

Muriatic acid has been carefully used by trade professionals for decades to treat and remove industrial stains from tile and stone surfaces. When used in the home, it is important to thoroughly ventilate the area and protect yourself extensively from this corrosive agent. Heavy gloves, mask and eye protection are imperative, but if you exercise reasonable caution, this tool can be just the trick to removing those stubborn stains. Dilute the acid to a 60/40 acid/water solution. Then with a toothbrush or other soft bristle brush, apply the mixture and scrub the area clean. Once the stain is removed, quickly wash the area down and discard the remaining mixture in a safe and proper manner. Refer to your local constabulary regarding regulations for disposal of acid products.

Cleaning the Grout

If a stubborn stain emerges in your grout, follow the same steps described in the procedure above to gently work the stain out. If a situation arises in which the stain cannot be removed, it might be necessary to replace that particular area of grout. Grout can be removed quickly and effectively by using a small grout remover, inexpensively bought at any home improvement retailer. Work the stained section of grout until you are beneath the stained area and clean grout is present.

You are now left with an indentation in the grout that needs to be filled. Bring a grout sample, if possible, to your local tile store or home improvement retailer, and try to get the closest match you can. Once you have obtained the material, pour the dry mixture into the cavity you created. If the color matches to your liking, vacuum the dry mixture out and follow directions on the box to make a small batch. Use a rubber glove and a finger to firmly apply the grout to the damaged area. Blend the mixtures in to the best of your abilities, and clean the area with a clean, damp sponge. Verify the joint composition is a match to the original grout.

Tile Sealers

There are several good quality tile sealers available. These are great tools to keeping your tile and grout looking fantastic, and with installation intervals of four years and beyond. Applying a tile sealer is a very simple process, and relatively affordable. Once applied, the stain resistance of your floor is dramatically increased, and the overall finish is kept to a factory high standard. Begin with a general and thorough cleaning of the floor surface; inspect the grout especially for any staining or discoloration, as this is the ideal time to address those issues. Next walk the floor briefly and watch for any for objects or debris that could interfere with the application of the sealer. Then apply the sealer to the floor surface evenly, mop it back towards the opening of the room, and allow the sealer to dry. Some products have you completed at that point, while others suggest a general buffing of the area. Use a clean soft rag and buff the floor using a circular motion.

Take the time to go through these steps, as tile provides a resilient, durable surface that, if treated properly, can bring a great element of design to your décor. For questions on products, be sure to speak with your local home improvement store professional for suggestions on your specific applications. Before using any acid products, consult with your local township regarding any regulations, and keep children and pets clear of the treated area until it has been washed appropriately.