

THE TRUTH ABOUT TILE & GROUT

# “You’re About To Discover The Insider’s Secrets to Having Beautiful Tile And Grout”



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## WHICH CLEANERS TO USE AND WHICH TO AVOID

### CERAMIC AND PORCELAIN TILES

For the most part, ceramic and porcelain tile will not be damaged by most common household cleaners. It would take something very caustic chemical to mar the finish on a hard fired, glazed tile; certainly not a chemical that you would have indoors.

The grout between the tiles, on the other hand, is directly affected by what chemicals you use to clean the floor. Use the wrong cleaner and you could set yourself up for a big maintenance headache right from the start.

For years, common household cleaners like: Vinegar, bleach, ammonia and have been used to maintain ceramic and porcelain tile grout. In fact, many professionals actually recommend using vinegar every time your mop.



Vinegar (a mild acid) works great to eliminate streaks, but it also tends to open the pores of your grout making it even more absorbent. When this happens, even regular mopping will make your grout look worse. The more you mop, the darker the grout becomes as it continually absorbs dirt and spills.

You know how your grout darkens when you mop the floor, and then slowly dries back up lighter? Every time that happens, any dirt in your mop water just found its way into your grout joints, slowly ruining the look of the room and permanently changing your grout color to a sick shade of yuck.

Using bleach on the tile and grout sounds like it would kill bacteria but it also can do permanent damage as it continues to eat away at the grout if not thoroughly rinsed.

Dish soap seems like a safe alternative but unless it is rinsed, the soap residue tends to attract more dirt, meaning you'll be mopping the floor more often further discoloring your grout.

Now you know which cleaners to avoid; vinegar, bleach ammonia and harsh acids when cleaning your grout. So which is the right cleaner then? What cleaner is safe, yet effective enough to really get the floor clean?

## USE THE RIGHT CLEANER FOR BEST RESULTS

### IT DEPENDS ON WHAT KIND OF DIRT IS ON THE FLOOR

For regular maintenance, a small amount of a neutral pH tile and grout cleaner should be used, diluted in clean water. Follow the manufacturer's suggested dilution ratio based on how dirty the floor is.



For heavily soiled areas, specially designed heavy duty cleaners can be used. If the area has any sort of oily buildup like in a kitchen, an alkaline based cleaner will typically yield the best results.

On lighter grout, if the dirt is more "surface" type dirt from traffic, an acidic based cleaner designed for tile and grout can often times be best. And in some cases, both should be used to achieve the best results possible.

To color seal old grout back to new, both cleaners are recommended to provide the strongest bond possible between the grout and color protection.

## GROUT SEALERS

### IT DEPENDS ON WHAT KIND OF DIRT IS ON THE FLOOR

Grout sealers are used to reduce the maintenance required to keep the grout looking clean. The best time to protect your grout is when it is new; before it has had a chance to start getting dirty.

Grout is very porous, like a sponge that will readily absorb spills. But not



every sealer is the same and there are some you may want to avoid. So what sealer should you use?

The main types of sealers for grout are clear penetrating, topical acrylics and colorants or "grout stains". Let's take a look at each one in more detail.

Clear penetrating sealers come in a variety of quality grades with varying degrees of stain resistance, but the key word is RESISTANCE. Stain resistance means you have a little more time to pick up a spill before it soaks in. But none of them do what most of us think a sealer should do; make it easy to keep the floor grout clean.

When applying clear penetrating sealers, be sure to dry the excess from the tile surface. If the excess is allowed to dry, the residue can be difficult to remove and will attract dirt. That means you will see every place the excess will stand out like a sore thumb when the floor gets dirty.

Next let's look at top coat acrylics. Acrylics leave the grout with a shine. Think of it as a clear coat of finger nail polish on your grout. In theory, it sounds like dirt and spills would wipe right off, right? For the most part, that's true.

But the problem is that dirt and spills find their way past the acrylic sealers and discolor the grout anyway...now you just can't clean it because the stain in the grout is protected by the acrylic coating!

Besides that, acrylic coatings on grout make the grout look shiny and fake and can really detract from the beauty of the tile floor. And removing the acrylic sealer can be very difficult without the use of harsh strippers that you probably don't want to deal with in your home without the assistance of a professional.

The last category of grout sealers is grout colorants, a.k.a. grout stains. The use of grout colorants is an industry wide accepted method of correcting grout color issues and dealing with the hassles of grout maintenance.

Grout staining, more commonly called "grout color sealing" restores your grout back to a uniform color of your choice. Any discoloration or dirty areas are 100% gone...the grout looks like the day it was installed again. And your grout can be colored back to it's original shade, or changed to any other color you like.

Besides making the grout look brand new again, color sealing also provides a durable layer of stain proof protection that allows dirt and spills to be simply wiped away from the grout surface with soapy water; even if the spill has been left to dry on the grout.



While color sealing is not a difficult process, it does require a certain level of expertise to properly prepare the grout to bond with the colorant. And besides that, it's very labor intensive, involving hours spent on hands and knees carefully apply the grout stain to the joints and removing the excess from the tiles.

## **MAINTENANCE**

### **CHOOSE YOUR MAINTENANCE STYLE**

While grout sealers are supposed to help keep the tile and grout looking clean, don't even bother sealing your grout unless you follow this one simple cleaning technique.

If the tile and grout is not cleaned properly, it won't matter if your grout is sealed or not; even the best sealers won't keep the floor looking clean. Keeping tile grout clean, even color sealed grout, requires more effort than dragging a damp mop across the floor.

So here are the best ways to keep your grout clean depending on whether it is protected or not. Choose your maintenance style and decide for yourself if you should seal your ceramic or porcelain tile grout.

### **UNPROTECTED GROUT CLEANING**

For unsealed grout in ceramic and porcelain tile, the best strategy is to minimize the amount of water, dirt and spills on the grout surface. Because unprotected grout is very porous, it will readily absorb dirt, spills, and dirty mop water; the less water on the floor, the better. Sweep and vacuum frequently and pick up spills as soon as they happen, but anytime the grout gets wet it is absorbing dirt and changing color to a gross shade of yuck. It's only a matter of time before it looks bad.

### **SEALED GROUT CLEANING**

But for protected grout, the opposite is true.

For grout that is sealed with a clear penetrating, or acrylic grout sealer, the best strategy is to pick up spills right when they happen and to use plenty of water when mopping. Even the best penetrating sealers only provide stain resistance. The key word there is "resistance". Remember, stain resistance means you have a little more time to pick up a spill or dirty mop water before it permanently discolors the grout.

## COLOR SEALED GROUT CLEANING

For grout that is protected with a grout colorant or is “color sealed”, you won't have to worry about dirt and spills because they are unable to absorb into the grout and are easily cleaned away from the surface. Even spills left to dry on the grout are easily removed with soapy water.

But, don't take that to mean color sealed grout is self-cleaning. While dirt and spills are not able to penetrate the grout, they can build up on the grout surface and make the it look dirty. A consistent maintenance schedule and process will ensure your tile and grout will look new for years to come.

So here is the best strategy for keeping both clear and color sealed grout looking great:

- \* Sweep or vacuum the floor to remove any loose dirt or debris.
- \* Use a neutral pH tile and grout cleaner, and plenty of water so the cleaner can lift the dirt from the tile and grout surface.
- \* Provide a little agitation to loosen the dirt on the floor
- \* Allow the cleaner time to work. Let the mop water dwell for 3-5 minutes.
- \* Rinse the area thoroughly with plenty of clean water to avoid spreading cleaner residue that attracts dirt like a magnet.
- \* And now the final and most important step of all....

## NOW THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP

No matter if your floor is unprotected, sealed, or color sealed, the proper care and maintenance programs all share the last step..to DRY THE FLOOR.

If you don't dry the area, it will not stay clean. <-- period.

This can easily be accomplished by placing a broom on top of a big terry cloth towel and moving it around the floor to pick up the excess water, dirt and cleaner residue.





## CONCLUSION

Even the best tile and grout cleaners and grout sealers don't have the ability to magically vaporize dirt off the surface. By using the proper types of cleaners, you can avoid damaging your grout or making your grout more porous and more susceptible to discoloration.

There are many types of tile and grout sealers available. Most provide basic stain resistance—a little more time to pick up a spill before it soaks in; but they don't make the grout easy to keep clean with proper maintenance.

Color sealed grout is stain proofed, making it easy to keep clean. But even stain proofed grout needs to be maintained properly to stay looking fresh and clean. Employing the proper protection and maintenance techniques, you can maximize the beauty of tile and grout

The tile and grout should be rinsed and dried after mopping. If not rinsed and dried well, dirt is being left on the floor. Over time, that dirt makes the tile and grout look dirty and can spoil the look of a whole room.

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