



Tile Buying Guide

WHY TILE?

Use this guide to help organize your needs and preferences before making a purchase.

Homeowners and professionals alike have [trusted tile](#) for centuries. Ceramic tile (including [porcelain tile](#), quarry tile, wall tile, and pressed floor tile) all share the same [health benefits](#) that contribute to [healthy indoor air quality](#)—no volatile organic compounds (VOCs), formaldehyde, or polyvinyl chloride (PVC), [doesn't contain allergens](#), and allergens in the environment (such as dirt, dust mites, pollen, mold spores, pet dander, and allergens from insects) can't penetrate the nonporous surface of ceramic tile.

In addition to being free of the above harmful elements, ceramic tile promotes hygiene. The entire family of ceramic tile products is inhospitable to the growth of bacteria and options can suppress and even destroy harmful microorganisms, such as fungi, mold, viruses, and bacteria.

Ceramic tile's [wide variety of style choices](#) turns [floors](#), [walls](#), [countertops](#), and [outdoor spaces](#) from blank canvases into personalized masterpieces. Whether you're installing a [backsplash](#) to give your [kitchen](#) a touch of character, looking for a durable, [slip-resistant](#) solution for your [bathroom](#), or considering a dramatic accent for any space inside or out, ceramic tile can provide options for every project.

Any material that meets your aesthetic desires but can't be sustainably manufactured, used, and recycled is no longer a smart choice. The entire ceramic tile family of products has [environmentally-friendly](#) benefits that span a complete life cycle: naturally occurring raw materials, energy efficiency, durability, recycling, salvagability, and clean disposal. It's no wonder that ceramic tile has the lowest carbon footprint of any flooring material in North America. When you buy a product from the ceramic tile family, you can feel good about making a minimal impact on the environment.

STEP 1: WHERE WILL YOU PUT THE TILE?



ON THE FLOOR

[Easy to maintain](#), scratch- and stain-resistant, ceramic tile is a flooring option for any room. The endless design options allow you to customize your flooring for a one-of-a-kind look. Ceramic tile can also provide a [waterproof installation](#) system to protect your underlayment in areas exposed to moisture.



ON THE WALL

Add some flair to a room with a decorative feature wall or backsplash. The options for ceramic wall tile are absolutely eye-popping—metallics, linen finishes, and other touchable textures and [dimensional](#) tile—in sizes from [large format gauged panels/slabs](#) to [mosaics](#).



INSIDE

Ceramic tile can go anywhere under your roof. The [kitchen](#) and the [bathroom](#) are popular choices, but remember: Tile adds intrigue to a living room, makes a bold statement in a bedroom, and boosts [durability](#) for utility rooms such as your [laundry](#) room or mudroom, and anywhere there are kids or pets!



OUTSIDE

Ceramic tile options for [slip resistance](#) and the ability to withstand freeze-thaw conditions make it a well-suited decor element for your [outdoor living](#) (in all climates). Plus, whether it's a patio or a pool, tile provides the performance you need with the looks you want.

STEP 2: WHAT'S YOUR BUDGET?

Consider the costs of your material choice over the lifetime of your ownership, including maintenance, repair, and replacement factors. North American ceramic tile has the [lowest life cycle cost](#) when compared to nonceramic flooring materials, including natural hardwood, vinyl composite tile, marble, laminate, carpet, and sheet vinyl. Especially when compared to higher-end natural stones, ceramic tile can often get you the look you want at a lower price point.

Ceramic tile's [easy cleaning](#), simple maintenance, high durability, and [longevity](#) give it extra value for your purchase. A material with scratch, stain, and fade resistance, such as ceramic tile, will keep your surfaces looking their best year after year, while some nonceramic materials may show more wear than ceramic surfaces.

Your time should also factor into your budget. Some nonceramic materials require regular maintenance, such as surface sealants or special cleaners/polishers, and/or may require your time to repair or replace damage (such as stains, scratches, or buckling) more often than ceramic materials.

The seemingly endless variety of tile styles can provide [a range of options for different budgets](#). Share your budget with your designer or sales professional. They can help you choose the ceramic tile that best meets your functionality, design, and financial needs.

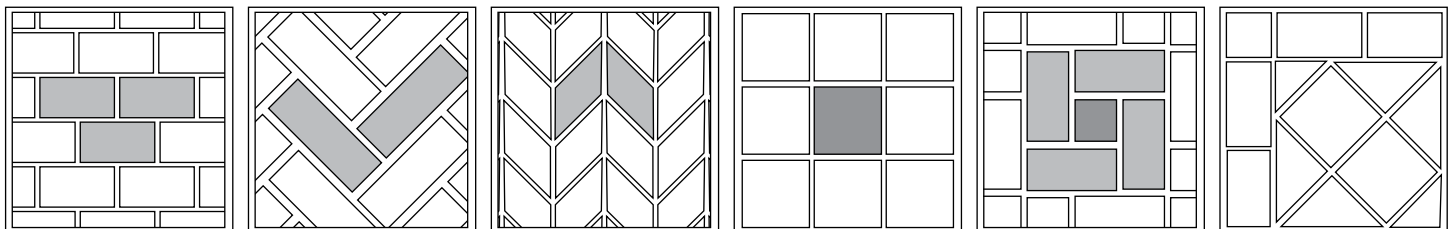
STEP 3: WHAT'S YOUR STYLE?

You'll find ceramic tile options in both tiny tiles that make up creative [mosaics](#) as well as [gauged porcelain tile panels/slabs](#) as large as 15 feet long — and everything in between. The wide array of colors, shapes, sizes, textures, and patterns allows you to achieve any look you desire. From rustic [wood-look](#) floors to [industrial minimalism](#) to colorful [geometrics](#), there's a ceramic tile style that will fit your style perfectly.

Our [Inspiration Gallery](#) will help you get a feel for what you like to easily narrow down your palette and style considerations. When you're selecting tile, focus on size, [color](#), and potential [layout pattern](#), as each affects how your space will look overall and how many tiles you'll need.

STEP 4: PICK A LAYOUT PATTERN

After you've found the right style and size of tile, it's time to get creative with the layout of your tile within your space. You can mix and match [tile shapes](#) and sizes or choose a classic design. Be sure to download our [Ceramic Tile Layout Pattern Guide](#) for 25 pattern schematics and additional guidelines for using color and grout in your design. Here are some popular examples:



Brick/Running Bond

Herringbone

Chevron

Grid/Stacked

Windmill

Diagonal Rug

STEP 5: DON'T FORGET THE GROUT

Grout also comes in a wide range of colors, some even with glitter! Contrasting your grout color with your tile will emphasize the shape of the tile and your layout pattern. Choosing a neutral grout color makes less of an impact and using a grout that closely matches your tile creates a seamless surface. Pair grout samples with your tile to help you make a selection and consider asking your installer to mock up grout colors with your tile to see the full effect. Review our [Grout Color Guide](#) for additional tips.



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STEP 6: HOW MUCH TILE WILL YOU NEED?

A SIMPLE FORMULA:

To find out how many boxes of tile you'll need, begin by calculating the square footage of the area you plan to cover. Divide this number by the square feet per box and add 10 percent for possible breakage during installation and any cuts that may be necessary for your layout and space. Talk with an installer or tile salesperson about your layout and room shape in order to fine-tune the amount of tile you will need.

HOW TO CALCULATE SQUARE FOOTAGE

Measure the width and length of the area to be covered in feet. Then, multiply those two numbers to get square feet.

$$\text{Length: } \boxed{} \times \text{Width: } \boxed{} = \boxed{} \text{ sq ft}$$

HOW TO CALCULATE THE AMOUNT OF TILE

$$\boxed{1.10^*} \times \boxed{} = \boxed{} \div \boxed{} = \boxed{} \text{ Boxes of Tile including recommended *10\% extra}$$

Total Square Footage **Tile Box Square Footage**

Manufacturing dye lots and sizing may vary slightly from run to run, so having a little extra tile in the garage will make you look like a genius if you do any remodeling in the future. (For example, if you change the layout of your kitchen, you can easily tile an area that was previously not tiled.)

STEP 7: HOW TO FIND THE BEST INSTALLER

Ceramic tile floors and surfaces are an investment in your home. To realize all the wonderful benefits of tile, of course it needs to be installed correctly. While many projects are perfect for the weekend DIYer, if you plan to [hire an installer](#), you want to be sure they are qualified for the work. A proper installation according to standards and specifications will protect your investment and ensure your tile looks great for years to come. Here are qualities to consider when [choosing a qualified installer](#).

- Operates a legitimate business, with reasonable business practices and a policy of standing behind their work
- Carries all required business licenses and insurance
- Has a traceable business location so customers can be sure post-installation questions and issues are addressed and resolved
- Has a track record for quality and service: ask for customer references and recommendations from suppliers and peers
- Has a portfolio of completed projects
- Participates in continuing education necessary to stay up to date on current building codes, regulations, standards, materials and methods
- (Bonus) Participates in tile industry programs or associations known for their continuing education. Examples include [CTEF](#) (Ceramic Tile Education Foundation), [IMI](#) (International Masonry Institute), [IUBAC](#) (International Union of Bricklayer and Allied Craftworkers), [NTCA](#) (National Tile Contractors Association) and [TCAA](#) (Tile Contractors' Association of America)



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CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to help you think through your project and make sure you remember every detail when shopping for ceramic tile or speaking with your designer or contractor.

DESCRIBE THE SPACE BEING CONSIDERED FOR TILE (e.g., kitchen, bathroom, countertop, back-splash, living room, bedroom, entryway, mudroom/laundry room, hallway, patio, pool, walkway) and the adjoining spaces. As part of this description, consider exposure to water and/or dirt, entry/exit points (if relevant) and the substrate in the area being tiled (if known).

How many square feet for the project (see page 3) _____ sq ft

Total budget _____

I'M INTERESTED IN THESE LOOKS:

ITEMS HELPFUL FOR MAKING A TILE DECISION:

- Photos of your space
- Photos of areas of your home that reflect your style
- Pictures that inspire you (The Why Tile [Design Gallery](#) or idea boards on [Pinterest](#) are helpful places to start.)
- Paint color swatches you are considering
- Fabric swatches or photos of fabrics or other coverings used in your space or surrounding areas
- Hardware samples
- Cabinet color examples (Match a paint swatch to your cabinets or take a small drawer with you!)