# **Drywall and Tiling: 9 things you should know**

Drywall is trending these days for tiling because it gives a beautiful look to your place. Also it is cheaper than the other underlayments but installing tiles on the drywall can have a negative effect to your tiles. The reason is that drywall is affected severely as a result of moisture so you need to prepare the surface before tiling it to stand against these humid conditions.

In this article, you will learn the method of preparing the drywall and blue board for tiling. You will understand the reason behind using the primer and taping the drywall joints before tiling it. You will also learn about how you can tile over the painted or mud drywall efficiently.

## **Tiling to Drywall**

Tiling on the drywall is not the best practice that you should be doing but it can be done by following some simple steps.

**Tiling over the drywall in the presence of moisture and humidity is not recommended, however it is fine to tile on the drywall under low moisture. So in the presence of moisture, you should use cement board as a backer board.**

First of all, clean the drywall completely to get rid of dust and debris. Now if you are planning to remove the tiles from the wall and then again tile it with the new tiles, you may need to purchase new gypsum board as well. Because it is almost impossible to replace the tiles without damaging the board.

Before placing the tiles on the wall, you must remove the remaining mastic and adhesive off the board to keep the surface smooth. Then peel off the wallpaper facing from the gypsum board so that the tiles adhered to the paper cannot fall when the paper gets loose. Now it’s time to repair the damaged areas on the surface. Mark all the cracks and holes on the surface and fill those using compound filler. Then in the last step, seal the board with any high quality sealer. Wait until it gets dry and then your wall is ready for tiling.

Similarly if you are planning to tile the wall without any tiles then first remove the dust as mentioned above. Scuff up any paint on the wall with sand paper by giving it a light sanding to remove the shine. It will improve the adhesion of the tile mortar that will help in maintaining the proper grip on the tiles.

Now your wall is ready and you can start tiling it. Before mixing the adhesive, you should establish a complete layout on the wall to avoid any errors. So first measure the height and width of the wall and divide the number by two to find the center. Draw the center line and establish a layout by a dry test so that you do not have to cut very thin pieces of tiles from a bigger pieces to adjust them at the sides of the wall.

Tiling the wall starting from top is difficult because there is a risk that tiles may slip so you can start tiling from bottom to top or from center to the sides. When tiling from bottom, you need to consider the slope of the floor because the joints of the wall can become uneven due to unbalanced floor. You can solve this problem by tiling the wall with the highest slope and then using the same starting height for all the other walls.

Divide the wall in to equal quadrants and complete each quadrant one by one. Now mix the thin-set and spread it on the wall. Fix the first tile and put spacers at the edges to maintain equal distance between the tiles. Next place the second tile and complete the whole row by putting spacers between all the tiles. Make sure that tile joints are in line with each other and tape the side of the tiles with the painter’s tape until the adhesive is dried off.

Let the adhesive dry for 24 hours then remove the painter’s tape and spacers. Mix the grout and apply it between the tiles to maintain equal grout joints between the tiles. Clean the tiles using some sponge or mop to clear any remaining adhesive or grout from the tiles.

## **Do I need to Prime Drywall before Tiling**

**If you are tiling the old drywall and you had already applied the primer over it then there is no need to apply the primer again. But in case of new drywall, you should prime over it. The main advantages of primer is that it acts as a moisture and temperature resistant for the surface and it also provides better adhesive force between the wall and tile.**

Primer is mostly applied on the surfaces like drywall, concrete and wooden wall for preventing the growth of the mold and it also provides water proofing to the surface. Since we know that drywall material is very absorbent and it will absorb the humidity of the adhesive when applied on the drywall. This absorbent property of the drywall will weak the bond between the tiles and the adhesive by hardening the adhesive and tiles will fall from the wall. So applying primer on the drywall prevents it from absorbing the solvents from the mortar.

Also in the presence of heat and sunlight, the adhesive loses it adhesion and grip on the tiles. Primer provides protection against such temperature changes and it also acts as a barrier against the moisture and humidity on the dry wall surface. Other than these advantages, using primer on the drywall before tiling also increases the surface energy of the substrate.

## **Tiling over Painted Drywall**

**In order to tile over the painted drywall, firstly you need to scrape away the paint from the wall to get rid of any texture on the wall and to make the surface flat. Then clean the painted drywall with TSP (tri-sodium phosphate) to scrub away any grease or stains on the wall. This will help the mortar to adhere perfectly on the wall and hold the tiles strongly. Fill any holes and cracks on the wall using the compound filler and then using sandpaper remove the shine to create a strong bond between the tiles and wall**.

Clear the surface from the dust and debris, wipe it down with the damp rag and let the wall dry before moving to the next step. Now your painted drywall is ready for tile installation and you just need to follow the procedure as explained above to tile your wall efficiently.

## **Tiling over Drywall Mud**

**People usually ask, is it suitable to tile over drywall mud? The answer is yes, it is not harmful to tile over drywall mud, and you just need to be a little more cautious during tiling over it. If there is a lot of damaging on the wall then I would recommend you to replace it. Before tiling, prime the surface where there is a big coating of the drywall mud. In the next step, you can simply mix the thin-set and spread it over the surface and start tiling. Just make sure that thin-set doesn’t dry too soon because the mud will try to absorb the moisture from the thin-set.**

Drywall mud is basically the joint compound that is used to strengthen the joints of drywall and to smooth the surface. Mudding is applying multiple coats of compound on the drywall and you can either mix the compound by yourself or use the premixed mud type.

Begin by applying the all-purpose mud that goes on smoothly and dries with in few hours. Then for the final coating, apply the topping mud over the drywall surface. The topping mud is not a strong adhesive that is why it is not suitable to use as a starting coat.

## **Priming Drywall before Tiling**

**It is suitable to prime over the drywall before tiling it because drywall is very much porous so it will absorb the moisture of the adhesive that will weakens its grip over the tiles. Also if there is a moisture or humidity in the area where you are installing tiles over the drywall then applying primer is necessary. Drywall surface is not water proof and moisture affects the surface that results in cracking of tiles and also tiles lose their structural integrity.**

So priming on the new drywall before tiling is important for the tiles to hold and maintain their grip on the surface for the longer period of time.

## **Do I need to tape Drywall Joints before Tiling**

**Taping the drywall joints before tiling is a good practice because leaving gaps in the joints expose it to the moisture and humidity that will have a negative effect on the tiles mastic and eventually tiles will lose their grip and falls off.**

Most of the experts and professionals tape and seal the drywall joints as a necessary step for tiling the drywall because they are aware of the harmful effects of moisture on the tiles without taping. Covering the seams of the drywall with compound and taping the joints does delay the project by a day because the compound needs time to dry. But the cost of seam and taping is nothing as compared to the damage that moisture will cause to the tiles.

## **How to prepare Blue board for Tiling**

**The surface of blue board makes it difficult for the tiles to adhere with the board so you need to coat the surface with primer to provide a suitable surface for the tiles to adhere effectively. So first step in the preparation of blue board is to cover it with flat sealing primer making a layer by rolling it on the surface. Then wait for 24 hours and let the primer dry.**

Establish a layout through dry test by placing tiles on the surface without mortar. Next mix the thin-set and spread it over the surface using the trowel. Fix the tiles on the surface by maintaining equal distance between the tiles using the spacers. Then after 24 hours grout the joints and clean the tiles with some mop or sponge.

Blue board is mostly used as a plaster and it has a moisture resistant core. It is more durable than drywall and prevents mildew growth. Because of its moisture resistant core, it acts as a perfect underlayment for the damp areas like washroom, and for ceramic tiles it provides the good surface for tiling. The blue board is water resistant, not totally water proof so you need to prepare the surface before tiling over it.

## **Tiling a shower over Drywall**

Tiling a shower over drywall is a great way to give your washroom a beautiful look but it is very important to choose the right kind of drywall before tiling. The reason is that shower is the place where there is always a presence of moisture, and water continuously seeps through the grout joints thus damaging the joints and tiles. That is why, it is very important to choose the right type of drywall for tiling a shower.

**You can use regular drywall for tiling over the shower but you need to seal the surface and provide water barrier behind the surface so that the water seeping from shower cannot damage tiles structural integrity. However, instead of using regular drywall, you can also use blue or green board that are kind of dry boards. Also they provide better resistance against the moisture and are less expensive than drywall.**

## **Tiling Backsplash over Painted Drywall**

Backsplash are basically used to fill the gaps between the cabinet and top and is mostly used in the washrooms and kitchens.

**Before tiling the backsplash over painted drywall, you need to prepare the surface and scrub away any loose paint from the wall. Then as usual, clean the surface from dust and debris. Fill the cracks and holes on the surface using compound filler, now your surface is ready for tile installation. Before placing the tiles, mark your initial position where you will fix the first tile. Now start placing tiles on the surface and make sure that all the tiles are in line with each other. Complete the whole surface and wait for the mortar to dry, then clean the tiles with wet sponge.**