# **How to Tile a Wall, step by step**

Tiling your wall for renovation is a great option because it gives an eye-catching look to your place. It protects your place from getting extra moisture and acts as a water proof barrier. Also it lasts for a very long period of time and they are very easy to clean. But tiling without any doubt is an expensive process and if you have a limited budget, then instead of paying to the professionals, you should tile the wall by yourself. As a beginner, tiling your wall can be a difficult and time consuming task. You should be very patience when tiling your wall because it requires a lot of precision and time.

**The first step in tiling a wall is to gather all the necessary tools and materials that include thin-set, grout, trowel and other tools. Before tiling, it is necessary to cut the power and water to the room and then prepare the wall by filling the damaged areas and removing wallpapers and dust. Then do a dry test before mixing the thin-set by placing the tiles on the wall to reduce any risk of error and establish a layout. Now mix the thin-set and install the tiles on the wall one by one and use plastic spacers to maintain equal distance between the tiles. After 24 hours, remove the spacers and apply grout to cover the gap between the tiles.**

In this article, you will learn the complete method of tiling your wall step by step. You will learn about all the tools and materials required to tile a wall and how to prepare your wall for tiling.

## **Steps for an Effective Wall Tiling**

Tiling your wall is not a difficult task but it can take you a lot of time more than your expectation to tile. So you must be very patience when tiling your wall and follow certain tips for an effective result.

### **Tiling tools and material**

As a beginner, the first step when tiling any place should be the complete knowledge of tools and materials you are going to need for tiling. So firstly, you must gather all the necessary tools and materials that are required for tiling the wall.

* **Underlayment:** When preparing the substrate, underlayment plays an important role. It is put on the top of thin-set during preparation before tiling. Backer board is the most common underlayment tool used for this purpose. Similarly, membrane and water proof underlayment can also be used for this purpose under special conditions. Membrane is use for the protecting the floor from bending or flex and also to prevent the separation of joints.
* **Thin-set:** The thin-set is the adhesive material use to hold the tiles to the desired spot. The thin-set can be a cement mortar or the thin-set mortar. So mix the thin-set according to the instructions given by the manufacturers. The mixing of thin-set should be done very carefully and according to the specifications because this substrate is the only thing that is going to keep the tiles from falling. After two or three remixing, the thin-set is ready and you should move to the next step.
* **Grout:** The grout is a material use to fill the spacing between the tiles. The type of grout you should use depends upon the type and color of tiles. The color of grout should be in resemblance with the tiles color so that it can cover the small mistakes happens during tiling. Premixed grouts are also available in the market and these grouts eliminate the extra work of mixing. Other than these, grouts with sand and without sand can also be used depending upon the targeted area. Sanded grout is use as a baseline adhesive while unsanded grout is use in the areas with smaller joints.
* **Trowel and other tools:** When tiling any surface, trowel is the most important tool required for an effective tiling. Trowel can be used for cleaning the excessive grout from the tiles, to pop out the tile from the surface and for many other purposes. Other than trowel, the basic tools you will need during tiling are tile cutter, plastic spacers, painter’s tape, bucket and sponges to clean the tiles.

### **Safety Precautions**

As a beginner, you need to be very careful when tiling your place and you must take all the necessary precautions before tiling. When tiling a wall, you must be very careful about the pipes. You can accidentally hit or break the pipe during drilling so it is very necessary to identify the position of the pipes and tile through that area very carefully. Also cut the power and water to the place where you are tiling for further safety.

### **Preparing the Wall**

Preparing the wall before tiling is very necessary for an effective results. The wall you are planning to tile must be completely flat for the tiles to stick to it effectively. So firstly, you need to remove each and every wallpaper from the wall you are tiling. If the wall is already tiled then remove those tiles first. The adhesive use for the tiles is very strong so it is recommended to use a wallpaper steamer to soften the adhesive and then remove the tiles. Then fill the damaged areas on the wall to make it flat and at last wash it. Use ammonia based cleaner or tri-sodium phosphate to remove any remaining dust, grease and oils from the wall.

### **Tile Selection**

For selecting the tile, firstly you must learn about the number of tiles you will require to cover the whole area you are planning to tile. For this purpose, measure the length and width of the wall first then multiply the both numbers with each other. This will give you the area of the wall. Then divide the calculated area with the size of tile that you have chosen and the final result will be the number of tiles you will need to cover the whole wall.

Then the next step is the tile selection and it depends upon the surface you are planning to tile. If the targeted surface is floor then the required tiles will have a different quality as compared to the wall tiles. The reason is that floor has to bear all the weight so floor tiles need to be stronger than wall tiles. Usually, the tiles with PEI rating of 0 are used on the walls and tiles with PEI rating of 5 or nearly equal to 5 are used on the floor. When purchasing the tiles, you should buy more than the calculated tiles in case any tile need replacement.

### **Establishing Layout**

After selecting the tiles and gathering all the necessary tools, the next step is establishing the layout of your tiling design. This will give you an idea about where to start your tiling and also reduces the risk of error. So since you are planning to tile the wall of your room, you need to measure the height of the wall and draw a straight line on the top from where you will start tiling your wall. Also draw the center line and make sure to establish a complete layout on the wall by a dry test before tiling it 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.

Sometimes it becomes impossible to tile the wall from top to bottom because there is a risk that tiles may slip so you can tile from bottom to top or from the center to the sides. When tiling from bottom, there is one thing you should be very careful about. If the floor of the room or the washroom in which you are tiling the wall is not balanced and has a little bit of slope then because of that slope, the joints of the wall tiles become uneven and look very bad. 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.

Similarly, when tiling your wall from the center, you must measure the distance from the center to the sides of the wall. Then first place the tiles vertically for the dry test and draw the complete layout before mixing the thin-set by marking each tile. This will help you in finding the number of tiles you need and also the half tiles that you may need at the end of each row. This will keep the good look of the wall by keeping the pattern symmetrical. Then repeat the same procedure horizontally as well.

The next step is to make equal quadrants on the wall and complete each quadrant one by one. And if you are planning to tile the whole room including the floor than I will recommend you to tile the walls before the floor because it will keep the floor clean after tiling and you will not be putting any kind of pressure on the floor tiles during the first few hours.

### **Adding Tiles to the Wall**

After following the above tips, now it’s time to tile your wall. So the first step in tiling is to prepare the thin-set. Carefully mix the thin-set according to the instructions and give it a couple of mixing. The thin-set usually takes 30 to 40 minutes until it hardens and ready to use. After the thin-set is ready, apply it on the back of the tile as well as to the targeted area and push the tile on the wall. Move the tile back and forth a bit to ensure that it settles. After placing the first tile, pull it back using trowel and check the back of tile. If there is still 80-90 % of thin-set coverage on the back of tile then your thin-set is ready otherwise mix more thin-set to make it hard enough so that it can hold the tiles still.

Repeat the same procedure and complete the whole row by tiling the remaining tiles. When placing the tiles, it is important to maintain equal distance between all the tiles. For this purpose, you can use plastic spacers between the tiles. Sometimes, at the corners or at end of the row the general tile size cannot be fitted so cut it according to the given space with the cutter and then push it. Taping the tiles with the painter’s tape is also recommended until the thin-set settles the tiles.

The spacers that are placed between the tiles should be able to be removed after the thin-set dries off. So you should be very careful when placing the spacers between the tiles and make sure to clean any excessive amount of thin-set from the tiles and in between the tiles. Because it is easier to clean the thin-set when it’s wet and also make sure to clean the thin-set from the floor or wall where there is no tile at the end of the day because after drying it will become the part of the surface and will make it uneven or bumpy.

The thin-set usually takes 24 hours to dry, so avoid putting any kind of pressure on the tiles during this time. After 24 hours, remove the plastic spacers and painter’s tape from the tiles. Now it’s time to use grout to fill the space between the tiles. Prepare the grout according to the manufacturer instructions if your grout is not premixed. After applying the grout between the tiles, wait for an hour so that grout gets dry, then clean the front of the tiles with some sponge or mop.

## **Final Words**

Tiling your wall is simple and easy if you follow the steps given in this article. In order to install the tiles on your wall, first you need to gather all the tools and material. Now for an effective tiling, establishing layout by a dry run and preparing your wall before mixing the thin-set is really important. It reduces the risk of error and you also learn about the number of tiles required to cover the whole wall. After preparing the surface, you can install tiles on the wall by applying the thin-set.