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Tile Flooring Buying Guide: How To Choose The Best One For You

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Tile flooring is great because of its durability and multitudes of designs and styles. Finding the right tile can seem overwhelming at first, but with a little research, you can find the flooring option that best fits your needs. You’ll want to pick out the right tile for your space. That includes choosing the right design, the correct hardness, the perfect size and the proper shape. Tile can simply stun when everything falls into place, and if you choose an affordable type of flooring, you won’t have to break the bank for great style, either.

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What Is Tile Flooring?

Tile flooring typically shows up in bathrooms and kitchens but can be used throughout the house. Tile comes in two forms: ceramic and porcelain, so it’s important to know the differences between the two before selecting tile flooring.

Types of Tile Flooring

Though there are two types of tile, there is also floor tile and wall tile. Wall tile is thinner, lighter and not suitable for foot traffic. It rates lower on the hardness scale. Wall tile is used primarily for backsplashes or countertops.

Ceramic Tile

Ceramic tile isn’t as durable as porcelain tile because of the way it’s composed and fired. But it is cheaper than porcelain tile, easier to cut, more flexible and can have texture for an added visual effect.

Porcelain Tile

Porcelain tile differs from ceramic tile because it’s made with finer clay packed at higher pressures and baked at higher temperatures. Those differences make porcelain more durable than ceramic and it’s less porous than ceramic.

Tile Sizes

Tiles can come in a variety of sizes. Tile is considered large when it reaches 15 inches or greater. Tile also comes in squares from 2 inches to 12 inches, but usually come in 6-inch squares. Rectangular tile typically comes in sizes like 1-inch by 3-inch, 4-inch by 16-inch or even larger sizes like 6-inch by 24-inch or 12-inch by 48-inch.

Mosaic tiles come in smaller sizes from ½-inch to 2 inches and can be arranged easily into different shapes.

Tile Ratings

Tile has five hardness rating classes, according to the Porcelain Enamel Institute. The higher the grade, the more resistant the tile is to scratching and chipping.

Class I: Wall-only applications

Class II: Lightfoot traffic, more ideal for bathrooms

Class III: Light to moderate foot traffic, good for areas with routine foot traffic

Class IV: Moderate to heavy foot traffic, perfect for all home use

Class V: Heavy foot traffic, perfect for all home use and heavy commercial use

Floor Tile Pros and Cons

Before buying, it’s important to know the pros and cons of tile flooring to make sure it’s the right material for your home.

Pros

Durable: Porcelain tile is waterproof while ceramic is more porous, which is something to consider when choosing between the two. Both are durable and rarely crack or chip. Plus, tile can be stain resistant, slip-resistant as well as scratch and dent-proof.

Easy to Maintain: Like with other smooth floor finishes, tile cleans up easily. Floors can be swept easily and spills cleaned up without staining. You can mop tile floors with a mild detergent to keep them extra clean.

Affordable: Ceramic and porcelain tile can range from $1 per square foot up to $9 per square foot at home improvement stores.

Cons

Tough to install: Cutting and installing tile is a tedious task that requires precision to make the job go smoothly. Once cut, grout needs to be applied to put the tiles in place. Long story short, it’s a big job and if you’re not DIY-inclined, it’s best left to the pros.

Cold: Tile isn’t a great heat conductor, which leads some homeowners to install radiant floor heating.

Grout needs attention: If a grout sealer isn’t used after installing tile, the grout lines can be prone to stains.