



GONZALEZ & SONS  
FLOORING DESIGN, LLC

# TILE BUYERS GUIDE

Tile is available in endless combinations of size, texture and color, offering something for everyone and every style. Plus, tile is durable and easy to care for, so it's ideal for high-traffic areas or areas where there's moisture or dirt, such as bathrooms or entryways. Our Tile Buying Guide helps you explore the options.



## Types of Tile

Tile Types and Uses				
Tile Type	Description	Wall Application	Floor Application	Shower Floor Application
Porcelain	Porcelain tiles are fired at a high temperature, making a dense, durable tile that's resistant to moisture.	●	●	●
Ceramic	Made from clay and other minerals, ceramic tiles are fired in a kiln then treated with glazed color. Glazing allows for brighter color, and the glasslike surface works well on countertops and walls.	●	●	●
Natural Stone	Tiles made of natural stone offer durability and the beauty of color variation. Seal these tiles before using for stain and water resistance.	●	●	● (recommend sealing the product)
Cement	Cement-bodied tiles are poured into molds then fired or dried naturally. Color may be added to the mortar for a custom look. Sealing is required after installation for moisture and stain resistance.	●	●	
Quarry Tile	Quarry tile is an unglazed ceramic tile. Its color comes from pigments present in the clay. Quarry tiles must be sealed for stain resistance.	●	●	
Saltillo	Saltillo, or Mexican tile, is air dried in the sun rather than fired in a kiln, which gives the tiles a unique look and finish. This process makes the tiles a little softer and less durable than other tile choices, so be sure to use a sealer when using these tiles indoors.	●	●	
Terra Cotta	Terra Cotta tiles are made of the same material as clay garden pots. The tiles are very absorbent and should be treated / sealed for indoor use.	●	●	
Terrazzo	A composite tile made of stone or marble chips molded in cement for a textured surface.	●	●	
Glass	Glass tiles are pieces of glass in various colors formed into uniform shapes. They're available as both mosaic collections with a mesh backing and as individual tiles.	●	●	
Mosaic	A combination of ceramic, glass and / or metal tiles mounted on a mesh backing for easy installation. Mosaics are available in a variety of colors and patterns and can be cut to the desired size.	●	●	● (ceramic/porcelain and stone recommended. Not metal or glass)
Brick Veneer	Thinner than brick, veneer is a good choice for walls and accent areas. Patterns are available in several earth tones.	●		
Brick	Typically used in outdoor areas, brick is a sturdy solution that comes in several earth tones that complement a rustic decor. Brick is versatile in pattern and placement. Treat brick floors with a stain-resistant sealer.	●	●	

Use this reference chart to better understand types of tile and their recommended applications.

## Tile Sizes

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Floor tile is usually 1/2 inch to 3/4 inch thick, manufactured in squares measuring 4 inches by 4 inches up to 24 inches by 24 inches. Other shapes are available such as rectangular "subway tile," octagonal and hexagonal shapes.

Wall tile is thinner and comes in squares from 3 inches by 3 inches up to 6 inches by 6 inches.

Mosaic tiles are 2 inches square or smaller and can be installed individually. However, mosaic tiles that are premounted on mesh sheets are easier to install for the DIYer.

## Tile Ratings

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Tile hardness ratings help you determine if the tile is suitable for the area where you plan to install it. Entryways need a hard, abrasion-resistant, moisture-proof tile. Baths require a moisture-proof, nonslip material (slip-resistant tile is treated with an abrasive material for safety). Some tiles are rated for indoor or outdoor use only; others can be used in either application. If your home includes ramps for universal design and you plan on tiling a ramp to keep the flooring consistent with the rest of your home, carefully explore slip-resistant tiles.

Some types of tile are harder than others, so tile is rated by a series of standardized tests. These tests evaluate a tile's relative hardness (the Mohs scale), its ability to stand up to wear and the percentage of water absorbed.

The Porcelain Enamel Institute hardness ratings are:

**Class I** - No foot traffic. These tiles are for wall-only applications.

**Class II** - Light traffic. Interior residential and commercial wall applications. These are for areas where little abrasion occurs, such as bathrooms.

**Class III** - Light to moderate traffic. Use these in residential settings with normal foot traffic. They are also ideal for countertops and walls.

**Class IV** - Moderate to heavy traffic. These tiles are acceptable for all home use in addition to medium commercial or light institutional use.

**Class V** - Heavy to extra heavy traffic. Approved tile for all residential applications, heavy commercial work and institutional foot traffic.

These ratings serve to help you find the right tile for your application.

**Good to Know**

Companies are not required by law to publish PEI ratings on tile.

## Porosity

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Porosity ratings are important. Porosity is the ratio of voids (or airholes) to solids in a tile, which affects the percentage of water absorbed into a tile. The denser the tile the less water it absorbs, because it has less airholes to fill with water.

A tile's porosity is critical - especially when choosing tile for kitchens and baths, since these areas need moisture-proof flooring. Porous tile shouldn't be used outdoors where cold weather produces freeze / thaw cycles. The classifications for the porosity of tile are: **impervious** (least absorbent), **vitreous**, **semi-vitreous** and **non-vitreous** (most absorbent).

## Firing

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The firing process affects the hardness of tile. Usually, the longer and hotter the firing, the harder the tile will be. The raw tile material, called bisque, is either single-fired or double-fired.

For single-fired tiles, the glaze is applied to the raw material and baked once in a kiln.

Double-fired tiles are thicker. The tile is baked a second time after additional color or decoration is added.