

Old World Stone Imports – Natural Stone Care and Maintenance Guide

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To insure your natural stone products provide you with lifetime of beauty and happiness a proper maintenance program is crucial. Natural Stone products such as Travertine, Slate, Marble, Granite, Limestone, and Onyx are porous by nature and require a different maintenance program than tradition ceramic and porcelain tiles.

New Installation:

Sealing is strongly recommended for newly installed natural stone products in order to provide maximum surface and below surface stain protection. Immediately after your natural stone has been sealed and allowed time to soak in and dry, the area should be covered with brown paper to protect it from debris and damage during the remaining construction period.

It is also strongly recommended that when using a man made product such as Ceramic or Porcelain that grout lines are sealed. This will help maintain the original color of grout.

Types of Sealers:

A few different options are available when it comes to choosing a sealer. Some of those options are a premium natural look penetrating/impregnating sealer, a stone enhancer, and a gloss and guard finish. When choosing a sealer, keep in mind the look that you are going for in your home and make sure the brand is formulated to provide maximum stain protection. Stone products should be tested periodically per manufacture's instructions to insure that the sealer is working effectively. Coverage of sealer varies upon the type of natural stone it is being used on. See a team member or the instructions on the bottle for coverage amounts. **Different types of sealers are made with different base products. Never mix two products without first testing the combination in a less noticeable location. This may cause undesirable reactions.**

Sealing Process:

*Though it is not always necessary some people prefer to seal the stone prior to grouting. This may help prevent the appearance of staining due to the grout getting into some of the pores of the natural stone. **When it comes to sealing, one of the key concepts is, its better to do more coats then soak it on the first time. (Less is More).***

- Materials Needed:
 - Bucket of Water
 - Gloves
 - Possibly a soft bristle scrub brush
 - Sealer
 - A couple White Rag or Sponge (Sponge not recommended)
 - A Little Elbow Grease
- Steps
 - **Preparation:** Clean the floor by hand with water, a white rag or sponge, and a soft bristle brush to remove excess grout, dirt, and dust that has gotten on the material. Wash a couple of times until you can wipe you hand across the stone and not feel dust and debris. Allow a few hours to dry before applying the sealer.
 - **Do not use a large amount of water this will cause a longer drying time. Stone must be completely dry before sealing.**
 - One suggestion that many people do is wash the material about three times. First wash is with straight water, second wash is done with a bucket of water and a couple caps of vinegar, and the final wash is just water.

- *Not recommended on any type of polished material.*
- **First Coat:** If you are sealing a floor wear clean socks. Starting in a corner, splash sealer onto your white rag or sponge. In a circular pattern, rub the sealer into the floor, buffing off excess sealer.. Remember the concept on the floor, *less is more*. Allow the first coat to dry until it is dry-to-the-touch.
- **Second Coat:** Once the first coat is dry repeat the first step.
 - Doing a **Third Coat** is optional.
- **Drying:** After the final coat, do not allow anything to walk or touch the newly sealed area for 12 to 24 hours.
 - If you notice areas that are tacky or sticky, this is due too to much sealer being left on the stone. To correct the problem, put a small amount of sealer on a rag and wipe the area. This reactivates the sealer.
- **Enjoy:** Once the sealer has dried you are free to enjoy your new Natural stone
 - **Note:** *Never through away your sealer or even the sealer bottle. You will want to maintain you stone and need to know which brand of sealer you used before.*
- **Maintenance:** It is strongly recommended that your stone be resealed every 1 to 2 years. However only a single top coat should be needed. To know whether or not it is time to reseal, a good rule of thumb is once water stops beading up on the stone . . . Reseal.

Routine Stone Care:

Natural Stone requires a different maintenance routine than traditional man-made ceramic tile. Many cleaners that are acceptable for ceramic and porcelain can stain, damage or dull stone. Natural stone should only be cleaned by natural stone cleaners and should never contain acid or bleach. Acids, even a light solution of vinegar and water, could possibly etch and eventually damage natural stone.

Regular Cleaning: The surface of the stone should be dampened with clear water. This will allow the cleaning solution to stay on the stone effectively. A solution of the cleaner and water mixed to manufacture instructions should be applied to the surface with a rag, sponge, or mop. On walls, kitchen countertops or vanity tops, a spray bottle can be used to apply the cleaning solution. Allow sitting for manufacturer's specified amount of time (usually 3-5 minutes). Agitate with a sponge, rag, mop, soft bristle brush etc. Mop or rinse dirty solution and buff dry.

Heavy-Duty Stone Cleaning: When stone areas have been neglected, you will need to use a heavy-duty stone cleaner and degreaser to effectively remove dirt, grease, grime waxes and floor finishes. These cleaning products are more concentrated and designed to deep clean the stone without damaging it. Be sure to change out the cleaning solution about ever 100 sf to avoid reintroducing dirty water during the cleaning process. Rinse with clean water when finished.

Stain Removal: Stone poultice will remove stains and grout haze from stone. Poultice is a fine, non-acidic, absorptive clay cleaning product that removes deep set oil stains, grease, and light cementitious grout haze from polished or unpolished stones. It is often pound in a 2 part liquid process or by powder. *Caution: Poultice may dull the shine of the polished stone. If this occurs you will need to use a marble polish to restore the natural shine.*

Remember, natural stone is a part of nature and will act as nature effects it. By proper maintenance its beauty can by timeless. Also remember when selling or buying a home with natural stone, be sure to inform the future buyers or ask questions to the current home owner. This will show consideration and will give them and/or you fewer problems to deal with once, you or they are living in the home.