



INSPIRE • CREATE • LIVE

# THE ULTIMATE TILE GUIDE

WHAT YOU NEED TO  
KNOW





# WHAT SIZE TILE SHOULD YOU CHOOSE?

Many people think that small tiles are best for small spaces, but in fact, bigger tiles create a sense of openness and make the room feel larger and less cluttered. Not too long ago, 600x600 tiles were considered large, but now there's a strong trend toward sizes of 750mm and beyond.



## **ARE LARGER TILES MORE EXPENSIVE?**

Larger tiles can be just as affordable per square meter as smaller ones; in some cases, they're even cheaper. However, with larger tiles, you might need to order a few extras to account for any wastage or breakage, as these cover a larger area.

Your tiler may charge a bit more to install larger tiles, especially if additional help is needed to handle them. The good news is that tilers are adapting to this trend, and many now have the right tools for the job.

In our view, the sophisticated look and spacious feel that larger tiles provide are well worth the investment.



## **LIGHT OR DARK TILES?**

The choice often comes down to the size of your bathroom and the amount of natural light available. If your bathroom is small or lacks a good window for natural light, lighter tiles are a great option. They reflect light, making the space feel brighter and more open.

On the other hand, if your bathroom is more spacious with plenty of light, darker tiles can create a warm, cosy, and moody atmosphere. Even in smaller bathrooms, dark tiles can work beautifully if you opt for a polished or lappato finish. These surfaces reflect light, keeping the space bright and inviting.



## **A TIP FOR CHOOSING A DARK TILE**

When opting for dark tiles, it's best to choose a full-bodied or double-bonded porcelain tile. This way, any chips or damage will be less noticeable, maintaining the tile's seamless look.



## **MATT, LAPPATO OR POLISHED? WHAT FINISH IS BEST?**

It depends on the space. If you want to brighten a room but still prefer the look of darker tiles, opt for a polished or semi-polished (lappato) finish to reflect light and create a more open feel.

Keep in mind that polished tiles require more upkeep, as they tend to show marks and fingerprints more easily. For this reason, they're better suited for low-traffic areas or bathrooms that aren't used by the whole family.



## **ARE POLISHED TILES SLIPPERY?**

Polished tiles aren't necessarily more slippery than other finishes; in fact, some may even offer better grip. The level of slipperiness can depend on factors like what you're wearing (socks can be particularly slippery) and whether your feet are wet or dry.

At The Tile Shed, we recommend asking one of our consultants to place a tile sample on the floor so you can test it out. Try standing on it with both shoes on and off. Our team will also be happy to wet the tile for you to experience how it feels when wet.

Every tile is unique, so it's important to find the right fit for your space.



## **WHAT ABOUT ANTI-SLIP & THE NEW IN/OUT GECKO TECHNOLOGY?**

Grip/Anti-Slip tiles are perfect for outdoor spaces like patios, pool areas, and decks, which can easily be hosed or water-blasted clean. However, their texture is similar to sandpaper, making them tough to maintain indoors—just try wiping one with a sponge, and you'll see the challenge!

Luckily, tile technology has come a long way. With the innovative Gecko In/Out finish, a tile with a smooth matt surface for interiors transforms into a grip finish when wet. This breakthrough is revolutionizing the market, and many of our favorite tiles have been upgraded with this cutting-edge technology.



# WHAT IS LOW VARIATION AND HIGH VARIATION?

This is typically indicated by the tile's "V" or "variance" rating, which ranges from 1 (uniform pattern with minimal variation) to 5 (highly varied pattern, where each tile looks unique).

Tiles that mimic natural stone or marble often have a higher variance rating, giving them a more authentic appearance.

High variation adds visual interest, and Italian and Spanish tile manufacturers excel at replicating these natural materials. In fact, with many different tile faces, it can be hard to tell the difference between these tiles and the real thing.



## WHAT ARE TILE FACES?

Tile faces refer to the number of unique patterns a tile has before the design repeats. Cheaper tiles may only have 1-3 faces (if you're lucky, maybe 5), while higher-quality tiles can feature anywhere from 20 to 60. This number continues to grow as manufacturers refine digital printing technology.

Once you know what to look for, repeated patterns in tiles become easy to spot. Since no two natural stone or marble surfaces are identical, repeated designs can be a clear sign that the tile isn't authentic. Italian and Spanish manufacturers excel at producing tiles with a high number of faces, making them almost indistinguishable from real stone or marble.



## **CHINESE, ITALIAN OR SPANISH TILES?**

Tiles are manufactured in many countries, and when it comes to durability, there's little difference between them. The real distinction is in the design. Refer to tile variation and tile faces for more details.

Italian and Spanish tile manufacturers are known for their significant investment in design and production research, which often results in richer, more vibrant colours. Achieving true and consistent black or white tones in tiles is difficult, but Italian and Spanish tiles stand out for their quality in this area.

While Italian and Spanish tiles may cost a bit more, they're worth the investment. Tiles are one of the hardest things to replace in your home, so it's smart to choose something that will last. We guarantee you'll enjoy them for many years to come.



# SHOULD YOU TILE BOTH WALLS AND FLOOR?

Wet areas like bathrooms and laundries need maximum protection from moisture and grime. Tiling all the walls and floors in these spaces provides the best defense against water damage while creating a durable, easy-to-maintain environment.

That said, fully tiling a room can cost a little more. If your budget doesn't allow for it, we suggest tiling the floor and key wet areas, such as behind the sink, bath, and shower.

For a balanced look, it's a good idea to tile the walls around the wet zones and the ones that are immediately visible when you enter the room. This way, you achieve both protection and aesthetic appeal, while less prominent walls, like the one behind the door, can be painted to save costs.

We generally advise against tiling only the lower half of a wall, as this can make the room feel incomplete and disjointed.



# SHOULD YOU TILE BOTH WALLS AND FLOOR?

Feature walls remain popular, but we recommend tiling the entire wall with a complementary tile rather than adding a small strip of contrasting tile or mosaic. Many tile ranges include matching mosaics cut from the same material, which add subtle interest without being too bold.

While water damage isn't a major concern in powder rooms, tiling the walls can enhance texture and visual appeal.

Remember, floor tiles can be used on walls, but wall tiles should never be used on floors. Wall tiles are more delicate and often feature 3D designs, making them unsuitable for the wear and tear of foot traffic.



## COLOUR MATCHING

When pairing marble tiles with other tiles, it's best to match them with tiles that complement the vein color of the marble. If the marble has a yellow or warm-toned vein, opt for tiles with a similar yellow or warm base. Avoid tiles with cool, blue undertones, as they won't harmonize well with the marble's natural warmth.



# WHAT GROUT COLOUR DO YOU CHOOSE?

When selecting your tiles, it's essential to also discuss grout colours with your consultant, as grout can significantly impact the overall look of your floor or wall.

Don't leave this decision to your tiler, as they may use whatever grout they have available, which might not align with your vision.

For tiles with high variation, match your grout to the base or dominant colour of the tile. For white or neutral tiles, we recommend opting for light grey grout instead of white, as it's easier to clean and won't yellow over time.

In wet areas, we suggest requesting Epoxy grout from your tiler. While it's slightly more expensive, it provides better water resistance and is less prone to mould growth—saving you time and effort on cleaning.



# TILE LAYOUT

When selecting tiles with your consultant, take some time to think about how you'd like them to be laid. There are several layout patterns to choose from, so it's a good idea to lay a few tiles out and experiment with different options.

The "brick stack" pattern offers a more traditional feel, while the "straight stack" provides a sleek, contemporary look.

For a modern twist, consider laying rectangular tiles vertically instead of horizontally. Our current favorite is the vertical straight stack for a fresh, stylish vibe.



## TAKE THE TILE HOME

Make sure you take a few tile samples home before you buy.

We encourage all our clients to see the tile in their home in the light it will be placed in. The colour and look of a tile can change dramatically in different places with different lighting. Our showroom lighting often isn't what you will have in your home, so tiles may look different.

It's important to be considerate to others in the process. As soon as you can, please return the tile samples to the store they came from. This will allow other people to make their choices promptly, just like you did.

Even if you decide to go ahead with that tile choice, your tiler won't be able to use the sample tile as it nearly always comes from a different batch.



## WHAT ARE TILE BATCHES?

Every time a tile manufacturer does another run of a tile, small (sometimes noticeable) changes can occur between the batches. Sometimes, it is a very slight colour change, and sometimes, it is a slight size change. We are only talking a millimetre or two, but when you are doing 2mm grout lines and one random tile is 2mm smaller, then you suddenly get a fat 4mm grout line.....not ideal, and yes, these small changes can stand out when laid amongst a different batch.

At the Tile Shed we ensure that all your tiles come from the same batch so that you have a consistent look throughout.....and your tiler will love you for this. Nothing gives them a bigger headache than trying to get an even layout from uneven tiles.



# WHERE TO FROM HERE: TILE INSPIRATION

At The Tile Shed, we offer free one-on-one consultations with our expert team. While booking ahead is always best, feel free to drop by if you're passing through! If our consultants are busy, help yourself to complimentary tea, coffee, and maybe some fresh baking while you explore our curated tile collections—there is plenty to inspire you.

Once you've chosen your tiles, we can bring your vision to life with our complimentary 3D renders through our exclusive Design Space programme. This feature lets you virtually walk through your project, giving you peace of mind before making your final decision.



# CARING FOR YOUR TILES

At The Tile Shed, we do more than just sell tiles—we provide all the advice, tools, and products you need to keep them looking their best.

The great news! Unlike natural stone and concrete, which require regular resealing (often annually), your tiles need virtually no maintenance beyond routine cleaning!





## CARING FOR YOUR TILES

When cleaning your tiles, the most important rule is to always use specialty tile cleaning products. Avoid using generic cleaners from your local supermarket, as they're typically made for vinyl or wood floors and contain waxes or shine-enhancing ingredients.

These additives aren't suited for tiles and can actually do more harm than good—attracting dirt and dust, which leaves your tiles looking dull and feeling slippery.

For the ideal cleaning solution, speak with our tile consultants, and they'll recommend the perfect product tailored to your needs.



## **FROM THE TEAM AT THE TILE SHED**

We hope this Tile Guide has been helpful in making your tile selection process easier and ensuring you choose tiles you'll love for years to come.

On behalf of our teams in Hastings and Taupo, we wish you all the best with your tile project!