



Saltillo Tile Cleaning, Maintenance and Troubleshooting Information

How to match a new Saltillo tile to an existing/older Saltillo tile or Terracotta floor tile:

Matching tiles can be difficult, but it is possible. As Saltillo and terra cotta tiles age, the clay takes on an ever-changing look in color and texture. If you have never resealed your floor, it is probably showing dark hues of terra cotta reds, oranges, and golden colors, and your grout has darkened. If you compare your floor to a new Saltillo, the new tile will appear brighter and less dark. Don't despair; if you have an authentic Saltillo floor, we stand a good chance at being able to match your tile. Just send us a photo of your floor and dimensions of your tile.

Steps to follow to install new tile next to existing tile:

1. After you've installed a new tile, clean your floor (old and new) thoroughly with a good stone/tile cleaner. We recommend our StoneClean 104 Cleaner concentrate.
2. Because terra cotta clay is porous, you'll also want to mop-wash the floor with a 50/50 mixture of acetone/water. Allow tile and grout to dry thoroughly. This may take days and good ventilation.
3. Reseal your entire floor (old and new tiles) with the same topcoat sealer. This final coat of sealer will give the entire floor the same sheen finish and create a best blend of old and new tiles.

How to clean a soiled or dirty Saltillo tile:

Most stains can be cleaned out of clay tile. Some things that you can try to remove stains include the following:

1. Scrub with gentle cleaner and brush.
2. Scrub with more aggressive cleaner followed by acetone/water wash. We recommend our StoneClean 104 cleaner concentrate.
3. If stain appears near the surface of sealed clay, gently try sanding away stain. Follow this step by cleaning and resealing with a sealer that will color enhance.
4. If you are unable to clean stains from your Mexican tile floor, contact us for further advice. Photos or samples will be requested.

Do you have problems with lime pops, Alkali, or Efflorescence?

These imperfections are a natural part of Saltillo tile. If you have these characteristics, you do not have defective tile. Lime pops exist in the clay and can expose chips over the course of years. It's natural and adds to the aging and rustic appearance of authentic Saltillo tile. Just simply clean your tile and apply a coat of sealer over the chip that results from the lime pop. This will prevent the clay from washing away.

Saltillo tiles have salts and alkali naturally present in the clay which is used in manufacturing the tile. Soaking Saltillo in water can release these salts and cause efflorescence on the surface. As the water evaporates upward, the salts rise to the surface of the clay. Often times, this can be sanded off, cleaned with an acid cleaner like our V-Scrub cleaner, dry, and resealed. To minimize the look of this efflorescence, we do not recommend soaking Saltillo clay prior to installation. When possible, purchase the tile pre-sealed, install, allow drying, and applying a top-coat sealer across the tile and grout.

How to pick the proper sealer:

A good quality sealer can give you a very low maintenance floor for many years. Choosing a poor quality sealer will create many headaches ongoing maintenance. If you are planning to seal an existing floor with a new sealer, it's imperative that you apply sealer that is chemically compatible with the existing sealer on the floor. When in doubt, test an inconspicuous area first. If you plan on sealing a raw clay tile, save yourself time, money and headaches and purchase quality sealer. We have sealers available online or call us for expert advice. Qualities you should find in good sealer include: abrasion-resistance, non-yellowing, long life-span of at least 5-15 years, UV protection, multiple gloss finish options, and anti-skid alternatives.

Disclaimer: Please consult with a qualified, local contractor for your specific jobsite. Rustico Tile and Stone is not responsible for jobsites that we are not contracted to perform tile installation.