

# Selecting & Applying Grout

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Always consult the grout manufacturer to determine the appropriate product for your installation needs. It's highly recommended that you consult with the grout manufacturer or a tile + stone installation professional prior to installing the tile or stone.

Always read the warnings, warranty and instructions provided thoroughly and contact the manufacturer prior to application if you require clarification regarding proper handling & use.

The use of safety glasses, respirators (masks), gloves and knee pads is strongly recommended.

## What is Grout?

Grout is used to fill the spaces between individual tiles and is generally composed of a cement based material, either sanded or non-sanded that dries to become a permanent component of a tile installation.

Epoxy based grouts are also available, these use plastic resins combined with the grout and offer enhanced stain resistance and a larger color assortment, but are often more expensive than standard grout options.

The color of the grout used can have a significant impact on the overall aesthetics of the final tile or stone installation and should be taken into consideration before starting a project.

## Different Types of Grout

Selecting the right grout for your particular installation will reduce maintenance and enhance the overall appearance of the space.

There are four basic types of grout available:

- Urethane Grout
  - Epoxy
  - Non-Sanded
  - Sanded
- (also called Unsanded)

## Non-Sanded Grout

Non-sanded grout, commonly called wall grout, is cement based and is generally used in projects with grout joints smaller than 1/8 inch wide. If non-sanded grout is used to fill wider joints, the grout may become brittle and crack due to the lack of bonding. The grout will shrink as it cures. Grout joints should be sealed after installation to prevent water absorption and cleaned as part of a regular maintenance routine.



T (540) 286-3000  
F (540) 386-3010  
info@bfc ceramics.com  
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## Sanded Grouts

Sanded grout is generally used for larger joints (larger than 1/8 inch) and is the most common type of grout used for ceramic tiles. It's a cement-based mortar that has small sand grains added to it for a stronger bond. The sand particles prevent the grout from shrinking as it cures. While a great option for heavier tiles such as those made of natural stone, take caution when using sanded grout as the sand in the grout can scratch the polish of the stone, it therefore advised to never use sanded grout on a polished marble. Test the grout in an inconspicuous area before a full application to ensure it will provide the expected results. Sealing sanded grout joints is recommended as it is very absorbent and can soak up moisture causing staining.

## Epoxy Grout

Epoxy grout is a waterless, two part grout made with epoxy resins (the base) and a hardener (the activator). With some epoxy grout products, the color is a third addition. When fully cured, it forms an impermeable barrier to liquids that is stain and mildew resistant and doesn't require additional sealing of the joint, although it is still recommended. While more costly, challenging and messy to apply, epoxy grout is easy to clean and moisture resistant, making it low maintenance and a good option for use in kitchens and bathrooms.



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## Urethane Grout

A relatively new formula of grout in the market, comprised of a urethane based, premixed material that is ready to use and offers enhanced durability & flexibility. This formula requires no sealing and is resistant to stains, mildew and most household chemicals. It can be used indoors, outdoors and even in submerged applications. Urethane grout will cure to a very hard state with low shrinkage and high crack resistance. It will not dull or fade, the color will remain intact for years to come. The premixed formulas are also easy to apply and low maintenance.

## Maintenance Tips:

- Thoroughly read & follow all manufacture warnings and instructions for all grouting products before use and test all materials in a small inconspicuous area before full application
- Select a grout with high color consistency, and mix according to the manufacturer's instructions - improper mixing can lead to inconsistently-colored grout lines
- Find a caulk that matches the grout color – it's recommended to try match both products from the same manufacturer
- Grout takes several days to cure & set, once this is complete you will see the final color
- Lighter-coloured grouts will show dirt and require more effort to maintain
- Clean the grout and tile as part of a regular maintenance routine
- Sealers can change the color of the grout, always test before full application



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## Choosing Grout Colors

- The color composition of the tile you've chosen will help you select a complimentary grout color
- Decide if you want the grout color to blend for subtlety, contrast for boldness or simply accent the tiles and overall look of the room
- Blending the grout will make the tile and grout joints less visible, to achieve this look, select a grout that is very similar to the tile color
- Contrasting colors can create an intriguing patterned look and enhances the visibility of the tiles and grout joints; the greater the contrast the more noticeable the pattern will be
- When contrasting colors make sure to pick colors that complement each other
- For an accenting grout color, pick up on color tones from other elements in your design or space (i.e. wall color, art, furniture, countertops); while this may be a trendy choice, it can require a lot of work to update should you choose a different accent colour at a later date

## Sealing Grout

While grout can be water-resistant, it is still susceptible to moisture absorption. It is recommended to seal grout to protect it from staining. A grout sealer can be easily applied to the grout joints once the grout has had enough time to cure and thoroughly dry. Ensure the grout sealer you are purchasing is compatible with the type of grout, tile and environment to which it is being applied.



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## Cleaning Grout

Routine grout cleaning can be done with a mild, pH neutral cleaning solution that is free of acid or bleach that will not affect existing sealers or coatings. For periodic deep cleaning of grout, a concentrated tile & grout cleaner can be used. Look for a cleaner that has non-polluting chemicals and low VOC levels. Ensure the cleaner is safe for use on your tile as well and capable of removing grease, soap scum, mildew and body oils. Always read and follow the instructions on the product label. Rinse the area with clear water and pat dry with a clean towel or sponge to remove any residue. Do not use acidic solutions / cleaners as part of a regular maintenance routine.

## Grout Repairs

Regularly inspect tiles and grout joints for any damage that may occur overtime.

Have any damage professionally repaired / replaced.

If repairing the damage yourself, be sure to wear work gloves and eye protection.

To repair a grout joint, use a grout saw, mechanical rotary tool or a hand tool, such as a chisel, to remove the grout in the damaged area. You will need to work carefully and slowly to prevent damaging surrounding tiles and grout joints. Once the grout has been removed, ensure the joint is clear of any debris and wiped clean with a dry cloth. The joint can then be re-grouted. Take caution to match the replacement grout texture and color to the existing grout. Read and follow instructions on the product label. Ensure the grout has had enough time to cure before cleaning.

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## Grout Application

After the installation of the tiles, the next step is to grout the joints (this would be done after an initial sealer application for stone tiles). Select the appropriate grout for your project taking into consideration the type of tile, the location of the application and the size of the grout joint. If re-grouting, be sure to completely remove all of the old grout compound. Ensure that the thinset mortar has had enough time to cure completely and that the grout joints are free of any dust or debris as this may prevent the grout from bonding effectively.

Mix the grout according to the manufacturer's instructions, mixing in workable batches to prevent the compound from drying before it can be used. Apply the grout to the joints using a trowel. Holding a grout float at a 45 degree angle pull the grout in a diagonal direction pressing it into the joint. If grouting floor tiles, it is recommended to start in the corner furthest from the door way and work your way toward the door (don't corner yourself into the room). Do not grout the corners and edges as these should be caulked once the grout has cured.

Allow the grout to start to set as per the manufacturer's instructions and then clean off any excess grout from the surface of the tiles by gently wiping with a sponge and clear water in a circular motion. Ensure the sponge is thoroughly rinsed in clear water between each pass. Gently run a damp sponge along the grout joints to ensure they are smooth. Using a dry cloth, buff the tiles to polish. Cover the new installation with brown paper (craft paper or a similar colorless, absorbent product) to protect it from dust or debris allowing for the grout to cure completely and protecting the new tiled surface until any other construction is completed.

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