

Consumer's Guide To Tile, Grout, & Stone Care

Provided as an Educational Service by:

Absolute Best Tile & Carpet Cleaning

Dear Homeowner,

If you have **ANY** of the hard Surfaces listed below, in or surrounding your home, you must read this report!

- **Ceramic tile**
- **Grout**
- **Porcelain tile**
- **Concrete**
- **Slate**
- **Travertine**
- **Clay pavers**
- **Brick**
- **Any other Tile with Grout**
- **Marble & Granite**

Cleaning hard surfaces isn't easy.

The biggest problem we all face with today's hard surfaces is 'protection' or 'repellency'. Most surfaces have not been properly sealed if at all. Hard surfaces that are unsealed or are sealed with poor quality sealers are a sponge for oil, food or beverage spills which can result in permanent staining. Proper sealing can and will lead to easier maintenance. This will protect your hard surface investments allowing you to take proper care of them adding beauty and value to your home.

Did you know?

- Vinegar and ammonia can damage most sealers
- Most contractors do not seal the surfaces they install
- Many floor cleaning products leave a residue that can inhibit sealers and attract soil faster.

In this fact-filled report you will learn how to properly maintain your hard surfaces. Included in this report you will find:

- Simple tests for determining your stain protection levels
- Answers to frequently asked questions about cleaning hard surfaces
- Easy care tips to keep those hard surface floors sparkling clean
- Spot removal techniques the pros are using
- Do's and don'ts on indoor hard surface care
- A maintenance plan you wish you had implemented the day of installation.

Ok, lets get started!

HARD SURFACE STAIN PROTECTION AND REPELLENCY TESTS

The following is a simple water based stain protection test you can do at home.

- ✓ Step 1: Take a spoonful of water; pour it on the hard surface you wish to test, including the grout (if applicable)
- ✓ Step 2: Wait 15 minutes
- ✓ Step 3: Visual Test: Did the water absorb? Did the color change?
- ✓ Step 4: Using a clean white absorbent cloth, 'dab' the excess moisture.
- ✓ Step 5: Touch Test: Does the tile or grout feel wet? Does moisture still feel evident?

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, your hard surfaces are not currently sealed correctly and are vulnerable to staining. Contact the company that provided you with this report, concerning proper sealing applications.



Above Left: Photo demonstrating water beading on sealed grout line
Above Right: Photo showing partly sealed/unsealed Limestone

As you can see from the graphics on the previous page, sealed surfaces do not allow penetration of liquids that can become permanent. Protect your hard surfaces today, for a fraction of the cost of replacement, you won't be sorry!

Most contractors do not seal the surfaces they install for various reasons. Primarily it cannot be done until at least 3 days following the installation, which means they'd have to come back. Most contractors do not offer a protection service and therefore do not even inform consumers of the importance of this process. As you can see from the illustrations, the benefits of sealing are obvious. There are some sealers available to the general public through hardware stores etc, unfortunately they are inferior to sealers that a hard surface specialist would use. Some need repetitive application, some are too easily 'washed' off with general maintenance products and some only protect against water based stains, leaving your floor vulnerable.

Even if you used the best sealers available, without a solid understanding of the product and the specific surface you are sealing you still won't have a properly sealed floor. Only specific study and years of hands-on training can give you the knowledge required to get maximum protection for your hard surfaces.

F.A.Q.s About **Cleaning Hard Surfaces**

Q: I have been told that bleaching the grout lines will make them look whiter? Is this true?

A: Bleach will make them brighter, but you may need to check with the grout manufacturer before starting to be sure the color wasn't dyed, bleach will certainly remove the color.

Q: I have what looks like water stains on my tiles in my kitchen, what could they be? How can I remove them?

A: 'Water' stains could be several different things, depending on the particular tile you have. Most of the time, water or mineral deposits can be removed with either polishing with honing powders and a hog hair pad or by using specific acid cleaners. Please DO NOT attempt either of these without proper training as you may permanently damage the tile. To remove these stains it may be necessary to contact the professional who supplied you with this report.

Q: I bought a 'steamer' to clean my tile floors with, it works pretty well, but some of the grout lines are cracking? What should I do?

A: First. I would cease all 'steaming' of that floor until you have the grout repaired.

Moisture that gets between the tile and sub-floor will be trapped under your tiles and will expand and loosen tile from the concrete or sub-floor.

Rinsing the floor is a good thing BUT, you need the right products to make sure you are not damaging the sealer. There is one product available that will actually seek out any weak areas in the sealer and fill them in while you're cleaning! Ask your hard surface specialist about it!

Q: How long will sealers last?

A: That depends on the sealer, the method of application and the frequency and type of maintenance. Anywhere from six months to ten years or more.

This is just a short cross section of a collection of various questions asked by new clients. For more answers to your questions about hard surfaces, don't hesitate to contact your professional Hard Surface cleaning company.

Easy Care Tips To Keep Those Hard Surface Floors Sparkling Clean

- At entry points to areas with hard surfaces, place entry mats for soil and moisture removal. The less brought in, the less to clean.
- Regular vacuuming. Some surfaces don't always appear to need cleaning, assume it does. As sure as dust settles on a windowsill, so it does on the floors. Be sure to use a vacuum with a floor height adjustment on the lowest setting.
- Avoid Spills as much as possible. Hot liquid spills are especially hazardous and also a lot harder to clean up because they can penetrate more rapidly. Spot removal procedures should be expedited as soon as accidents occur.
- After performing a wet maintenance, open windows or utilize fans to get air circulating. The faster it dries the better the results and less chance for rapid re-soiling.

If area rugs or throw rugs are used to decorate or 'soften' interior hard surfaces, be sure to use non-skid pads for your safety. (available at most reputable flooring outlets) The 'backings' used by most manufacturers of area rugs are abrasive. Contrary to

popular belief the non-skid pads are excellent. It is recommended that they are taken up and floors cleaned under them every month.

- Chairs and tables in hard surface areas could cause serious damage to floors if legs and corners are not protected. Teflon or felt can be used to prevent abrasive damage caused by the furniture.
- If you live in a part of the country affected by snow and ice, be sure to leave shoes that may have salt or liquid deicer on them at the door. Chemicals used in these products cause rapid and irreversible damage.
- Dry sand on hard surfaces in coastal areas should be removed as soon as noticed. Wear patterns and scratches will dull your floor and reduce enhancement efforts.
- Clean and rinse them often, once per month in low traffic areas and at least weekly in high traffic or kitchen areas. Rinse with plain water unless using the recommended cleaner/ protector product mentioned earlier.
- Allow dwell time for stubborn spots and stains, cleaning products are not magic, the longer they sit on that stubborn spot the better they work. Extra rinsing may be needed after stain is removed. If a stain appears permanent, DON'T PANIC, call the professional who gave you this book.

Spot Removal Techniques The Pros Are Using **In Their Own Homes**

Dry Soil: Natural stone should be cleaned regularly with just warm water and a clean, non-abrasive cloth, sponge or a mop. Neutral cleaners should be used and will help remove soils that normal mopping and dusting leave behind.

Spot Removal:

Liquid Spills- Lightly blot the excess liquid with a clean, dry, white cloth. As the cloth becomes saturated be sure to turn frequently. If color from the liquid is still evident, lightly mist neutral cleaner to the floor, allow 5 minute dwell time, then wipe in a circular motion with a clean dry cloth. Repeat if necessary.

Rinse

with water and towel dry.

Food Spills- Scoop up excess foodstuffs from the floor using a plastic spoon. Then blot excess liquid residues left by the food. Using a damp white cloth, dab or lightly wipe the floor in a circular motion. Spray neutral cleaner lightly to avoid overwetting, let dwell 5 minutes, wipe dry using a dry white cloth. Rinse with water and towel dry.

Oily Stains/ Spots- (*Inevitably this type of problem will occur. Oil tracked from driveway, spaghetti sauce accident etc. Improper use of store bought cleaners will inhibit future removal even by a professional. Follow these instructions carefully*). Blot up excess. Spray with neutral cleaner, cover with dry paper towels (2-4), apply weight (books work well), dwell time 30 minutes. Lift weight, check paper towels, if all towels damp with stain and cleaner, process is working. If no dampness has occurred, apply more neutral cleaner to stain, let sit 15 minutes then check again. Wipe dry with clean white cloth; if not removed consult your Hard Surface cleaning professional.

Mud/ Clay- Let mud/ clay dry completely. Vacuum. Remove dried mud excess using a soft nylon brush, or lightly with an old toothbrush. Spray remainder with neutral solution, and wipe clean with a clean white cloth. If grout lines still affected, apply small amounts of clear, sugar free, club soda and let sit one minute, then wipe dry.

Acidic Spills- Liquids and substances such as soft drinks, coffee, pet urine, vomit, vinegar, orange juice, wine, mustard are highly acidic. If not removed in an urgent manner these could etch some surfaces. In the case of an acidic spill or accident, follow the most suitable spot removal procedure above. Some spills will fall into a few categories such as the case of tomato paste. Tomatoes being acidic, solid as a food, liquid from the juices and

oil from the paste will be difficult to remove and you may want to consult your hard surface professional immediately.

As with all spill occurrences, if the floors have been properly sealed and protected the barrier created between spill and surface will dramatically increase the chances of successful removal. See Sealing and Repellency tests.

Do's And Don'ts On Indoor Hard Surface Care

- Do use only professional cleaning and sealing products on your floors and countertops. Pro's have used them for years, and after cleaning hundreds of floors you find out quickly what works and what does damage
- Do a regular 'damp mop'. Use a dry non-treated dust mop. It is the unseen dirt and grit that damages hard surfaces, prevention is the best fix.
- Do keep off floors until dry, all wet floors may be slippery.
- **Do everything possible to prevent accidents with perfumes, toothpaste, and makeup. These often contain harmful ingredients that may degrade your sealer.**

- Don't use vinegar, bleach, or ammonia for cleaning.
- Don't use abrasive products such as dry or wet compound cleansers, or tub and tile cleaners.
- Don't use store bought citrus based (lemon or orange) solvent cleaners.
- Don't drag furniture across hard surfaces. Also avoid dropping heavy items onto hard surfaces.
- Don't scrub hard surfaces. If properly sealed, light duty cleaning is all that should be necessary.
- Don't attempt to re-color grout lines. There are professional applications that can restore your grout to new-looking color. In fact any color of the rainbow can be chosen.
- Don't over wet floors when cleaning, always remove excess moisture. Air circulation is most advantageous for speedy dry times.
- Don't break your back trying to get those floors looking the best they can be. Consult your floor care company for advice or a free written estimate.
- Do all you can to prevent over spraying of aerosols in areas with protected hard surfaces. Air fresheners, bug sprays and other surface cleaners can settle on your floors and leave a residue making cleaning a bigger chore.
- Do consult your cleaning professional about maintenance plans that may be offered.

A Maintenance Plan You Wish You Had Implemented The Day Of Installation!

Initial Clean:

Have your floor care expert advise you on the plan of attack for restoring your floor. (if needed). Discuss repair work, stripping, grout coloring, etch repair, oil stain removal etc. Inquire about the best sealing product available to you for your particular hard surface. **Get that initial clean and protection service completed.**

Initial Maintenance:

Ask your professional about techniques for use of neutral cleaners on your floors or countertops. Vacuum these surfaces on a regular basis. Damp mop as needed. Spot clean with urgency.

Semi-Annual Cleaning:

Schedule a mid year professional cleaning. Over a 6-month period, your floors are likely to gather light build up of dust and other foreign particles that may require a high heat extraction process for removal.

Spring/ Fall Maintenance Clean:

Take up all rugs and non-skid pads, remove all moveable furniture. Vacuum, apply heavier application of revitalizing neutral cleaner, and damp mop.

Annual Cleaning:

Schedule annual maintenance cleaning. This will include a full steam cleaning and rejuvenation of sealer. A full inspection of wear patterns and other problem areas recommended.



EXPERIENCE GUARANTEED HARD SURFACE CLEANING SERVICES, RISK-FREE!

Hard surfaces are an investment in your homes' value and resale ability. **Don't trust your next cleaning service to an amateur.** No professional cleaner can offer you an honest price quote over the telephone. It is an absolute must that you obtain a FREE written, itemized quotation before hiring any company to work on your hard surfaces.

Be sure the company has a 100% No-Risk Guarantee, and has a reference list easily available for contact. Trade associations memberships, certifications and endorsements are signs of a company to do business with. Ask what, if any, continued education the cleaning technicians receive.

A reliable source for determining a company's code of ethics is available on the Internet at WWW.ETHICALSERVICES.COM. Here you will find a list of cleaning companies in your area who truly do believe in doing the job right the first time and standing behind their products and services strongly.

Absolute Best Tile & Carpet Cleaning has a 5 Star Rating On Ethical Services.com. They are the #1 Provider in their area.

Hopefully this special report has revealed to you that cleaning and maintaining your hard surfaces isn't really the daunting task it appears to be. And also that there are people out there who offer professional help, probably just like the person who gave you this report. Call them now for a **FREE HARD SURFACES AUDIT**, it's more than just an estimate, you will get a complete evaluation of your floors and countertops and show you how their services will benefit you. It's time you stop breaking you back, sit back, relax, and let the pros handle it!

Thank You!

Ron Guidetti

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Absolute Best Tile & Carpet Cleaning

413-596-5404 or Toll FREE at

1-866-LIVE-CLEAN(548-3253)

New Client Special Offers:

- **FREE** Carpet and Tile Evaluation (A complete inspection and we answer all your questions and explain what you can expect.)
- Home owners will get **\$43 off carpet cleaning and \$57 off Tile Cleaning and Sealing**. New Clients Only.
- **FREE** Tile & Grout Cleaning Demonstration