

A clean, precise tile installation is easier than you might think. With planning, preparation, and our step-by-step advice, you can do it on your own.

Step 1: Prepare the Surface

Make sure your surfaces are clean, smooth, and dry for best results. Take time to repair, patch, and level any damaged or uneven areas. Double check to make sure the surface is structurally sound and the area free of wax, soap scum, and grease.

Remove any moldings, trim, or appliances that may interfere with tile application and check the doorjambs to make sure tile has clearance when installed beneath. Identifying those potential complications in advance will help your installation run smoothly.

Step 2: Begin Your Layout

For an efficient layout, start by marking the center point of each of the walls in the room. Next, snap chalk lines between the center points of opposite walls to pinpoint the center of the room. Make any necessary adjustments to ensure that the intersection creates perfect squares.

Starting at the center point, lay a row of loose tiles along the center lines in both directions, using tile spacers as you go for even, uniform joints. Once you reach the walls, you'll need to cut tiles for a proper fit. If the cuts needed are smaller than half of a tile, you can adjust the center line by snapping a new line a half-tile size closer to the wall. If necessary, repeat this step along the intersecting center line for a precise design.

To make a large room more manageable, divide each section into smaller 2' x 3' grids by snapping additional lines parallel to the centerlines.

Step 3: Apply the Adhesive

As a general rule of thumb, be mindful to mix only enough of the adhesive to be used within 30 minutes. Using the flat side of the trowel type recommended on the adhesive package, spread a 1/4" coat on the surface of one grid area without covering the guidelines.

After doing so, hold the trowel at a 45-degree angle and use the notched side to comb adhesive into standing ridges. When you remove the excess adhesive, you leave behind a uniform, ridged setting bed for your tile. As another rule of thumb, do not spread a larger area of your adhesive than can be set in 15 minutes.

Stick to the script and facilitate your tile installation with the perfect adhesive application.

Step 4: Cut Tile as Needed

Start by marking carefully measured cuts-to-be with a pencil or felt-tip pen on the tile surface. You can use a tile cutter to achieve pinpoint straight or diagonal cuts. Make masterful curved cuts with a nipper, chipping away small pieces for best results.

For any full-length curved cuts, a rod saw is most properly suited to handle the task. After your cuts are made, smooth out any sharp edges with a carborundum stone to give a soft finish to your tile.

Step 5: Set Your Tile

Now that you've primed the surface, created the layout, applied the adhesive, and cut the tile, you are fully prepared for the actual installation of your tile.

Begin by installing tiles in the center of the room, one grid at a time, finishing each grid before moving on to the next. Within each grid, it will help to start the first tile in the corner and work outward.

Using a slight twisting motion, set tiles one at a time and avoid sliding them into place. Be sure to either insert spacers as each tile is set or leave equal joints between tiles. Save the perimeter tiles in each grid for last, leaving a 1/4th inch gap between the tile and wall.

Once a grid is completely installed, tap in all tiles with a rubber mallet or hammer and wood block to ensure a solid bond and level plane. Remove excess adhesive from joints with a putty knife and from tile with a damp sponge to prevent an uneven appearance.

Lastly, allow your hard work at least 24 hours to set before walking on it. And of course, take at least 20 minutes to admire the time and care you have put in to your new floor!

Step 6: Grouting Joints

Now that your Mohawk Ceramic Tile is in place and has had 24 hours to set, your last Step is to "grout" or fill the joints and consolidate your floor into one mass.

After carefully reading and following all instructions and precautions on the grout package, make only enough to use in a 30-minute period. As you remove the tile spacers and spread grout on the tile surface, use a rubber grout float or a squeegee to force it down into the joints.

Tilt the float at a 45-degree angle and with the edge of the float, remove the excess grout from the surface immediately. Now tilt the float at a 90-degree angle and scrape it diagonally across the tiles.

Once you've let the grout set slightly for around 15 to 20 minutes, use a damp sponge to clean any residue from the surface and smooth the grout joints.

Make sure to rinse your sponge frequently and change the water when needed.

Polish with a soft cloth when the grout has dried and haze forms on the tile surface, and rinse again with sponge and clean water if necessary. Give your newly grouted floor 72 hours before any heavy use and at least three weeks before applying sealers or polishes.

Take a deep breath and let out a sigh of relief; you have just completed your floor with Mohawk Ceramic Tile.