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Care and Cleaning of Ceramic Tile Floors

The beauty, elegance, and durability of ceramic tile has made it a favorite flooring choice for centuries, but these are not the only reasons for its popularity. Tile is surprisingly easy to maintain, and by using simple household products, you can keep your ceramic tile floors looking like new for years.

As with all flooring, the best care is regular care. Sweep or vacuum your ceramic tile floors at least once a week, more often if it gets regular use. Dust and lint can evolve into grime if they are not promptly removed, especially in areas where there is moisture.

Since ceramic tile is often used in "wet" areas of the home, it is likely it will be subject to different spills and spots. Simple washing or mopping with hot water and a mild household detergent should wipe away anything that finds its way to your ceramic floors. The hot water helps loosen any dirt that collects in the spill, and the detergent lifts any oily substance on the floor. If a "once-over" is not enough to remove all of the spill, try a second pass over the floor with a sponge or mop. If the spill remains stubborn, you can use a soft brush or synthetic scouring pad to loosen the spot, but do not use steel wool or a metal brush, as these may scratch the surface of the tiles.

After washing the ceramic tile floor, be sure to thoroughly rinse the floor with clean water. This will remove any detergent residue from setting and attracting more dirt to your floor. Occasionally, a tough stain will appear on a ceramic tile floor, especially floors with unglazed tiles, but these stains can also be easily removed. Prepare a paste of scouring powder and water, and firmly rub it onto the stain. Allow the paste to sit for at least 5 minutes, and then scrub it away with a soft brush or synthetic scouring pad. Repeat the process until the stain is completely gone, and then thoroughly wash and rinse the floor.

Even in the tidiest homes, mildew frequently finds its way, especially in bathrooms, spa areas and pool decks. Should mildew appear on your ceramic tile, use a simple solution of equal parts water and ammonia to remove it. Again, use a soft brush to clean away the mildew so you do not damage the tile or grout, and rinse the area thoroughly with clean water after the mildew is removed. Be sure the area is well ventilated when using the ammonia solution.

If the grout itself becomes stained or discolored, it can be brightened by a good cleaning with diluted bleach (3 parts bleach to 1 part water). Use the edge of a sponge or toothbrush for this job, and be careful to keep the bleach solution away from other surfaces. Even rust stains can be easily removed from ceramic tile. Commercial cleaners for rust stains that you can find in your local home supply store may do the job, or you can use regular kerosene to lift the offending rust. Be sure to wear rubber gloves when working with kerosene, and make sure the space is well ventilated.