

# Sealing Natural Stone

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Always consult the sealer manufacturer to advise on the appropriate sealing product. It's highly recommended that you consult with the sealant manufacturer prior to applying a sealer.

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

The use of knee pads, safety glasses, respirators (masks) and gloves is strongly recommended when handling any materials that contain chemicals.

## What is Stone Sealing?

Stone sealing is the application of a treatment to the surface of natural stone products to protect from water, oils or other liquids from penetrating into the stone causing staining or corrosion.

All stone is porous to some degree and exposure to liquids and gasses can cause unwanted stains and discolouration

## Why Seal?

Different stones have different levels of porosity however all are susceptible to staining and damage (such as scratching, scuffing or marring) without proper maintenance as they naturally draw in liquids and gases over time.

Sealing natural stone can protect its longevity, preventing damage and stains from spills and exposure to liquids and gases which can be very challenging or even impossible to remove. A sealer will help protect the stones surface and repel liquids, allowing for time to wipe them up before they penetrate into the stone. It creates a sacrificial barrier that protects the stone, but is not completely impenetrable and needs to be maintained.

There are several factors to consider when determining how to protect your stone, these include: the type of stone, its finish, where it is being installed / used and how it will be maintained.

## How Can I tell if my Stone is Already Sealed?

You can determine if a stone has already been sealed by applying a few small drops of water to the top of the natural stone in a small inconspicuous area. Let the water stand for approximately 10 minutes then wipe dry with a clean white cloth. If the drops left a dark spot after wiping up the remaining water, then the moisture is penetrating the surface and the stone needs to be



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sealed to protect it. However, if the spot doesn't darken, then the stone may be sealed against water-based stains. You will want to contact the supplier / manufacturer to determine if the sealer also protects against oil stains as testing for oil repellency can leave an oil stain on the stone.

## How do I Seal my Stone?

All natural stone tiles should be sealed after installation prior to the grouting process to protect them from staining. Take caution during this initial sealing process to ensure that the solution does not run into the joint channels creating a film along the edges of the tiles which will not allow the grout to adhere properly. It is strongly recommended to seal the tiles again after the installation has been completed to reseal any areas that may have been effected during the grouting process. Always ensure the sealant is appropriate for the type of natural stone it's being applied to, surface finish and the location the stone will be used in. Always read the manufacturer warnings, instructions and warranties thoroughly before application.

## Different Types of Stone Sealers

There are numerous different sealers available on the market from different manufacturers. Most can be categorized as either a topical or penetrating sealer. Always read the labels before use to ensure the sealer is safe for use on your stone.

For polished or honed marble, travertine, limestone, granite, or where the natural colour of a slate is desired a premium natural look penetrating/impregnating sealer is recommended.

A stone enhancer sealer is often used on tumbled, antique stones or on slate where a darker, enriched or highlighted character is desired.

When selecting a sealer, ensure it's formulated to provide maximum stain protection for stone products. Periodically test



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the stone surface, per manufacturer's instructions, to ensure that the sealer is working effectively.

## Topical sealers

Generally not recommended for stone tiles. Topical sealers may be referred to as topical coatings, this is because they are used to coat the surface of the stone, creating a protective layer to prevent the stone from staining and protecting it from damage such as scratching, scuffing or marring.

While effective at preventing stains and damage, these topical sealers reside only on the surface of the stone and can wear out quickly, especially if they are used in high traffic areas. They may also alter the look and slip resistance of the stone, particularly when the stone is wet.

Frequent reapplication may be required as the coating is softer than the stone. Stripping the coating is generally recommended before reapplying a new coating to prevent build up and uneven textures. This process requires extra caution to ensure that the stripping processes / product does not damage the stone.

Less expensive than penetrating sealers, topical sealer products can provide additional shine and even offer some slip resistance (review manufacturer information). However a poor quality topical sealer can cause the stone to turn yellow over time, particularly when exposed to UV light.

These sealers do not offer effective protection against weather damage or spalling.

Consider the location, exposure to light and other elements that can cause wear when deciding on a sealer. If the location is one where food is prepared, ensure that the coating is approved for food use.

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Always read the product label to ensure any product is safe for use on your stone. If you are unsure about the suitability of a product, contact a professional or the product manufacturer for clarification.

## Penetrating sealers

Also referred to as penetrants or impregnators, penetrating sealers are composed of a liquid resin solution that is absorbed into the stone residing below the surface, sealing off the pores preventing the stone from absorbing anything else.

These sealers effectively repel liquids and are longer lasting than topical sealers. They typically do not alter the look of the stone, but can affect the slip resistance (review manufacturer information).

Premium quality penetrating sealers do not require frequent reapplication and do not call for stripping the old sealer before reapplication. Special cleaners may be suggested to enhance and maintain the effectiveness of the sealer.

There are different types of penetrating sealers. An oil repelling penetrating sealer will repel both oil and water based liquids, it is recommended for use in kitchens and bathrooms. A hydrophobic penetrating sealer will only repel water based liquids. Sealers labeled as oil-resistant, will slow down the absorption of the liquid into the stone, whereas an oil-repellent sealer is designed to prevent oil from penetrating into the stone.

Stone enhancing sealers are also available on the market, they are a no-sheen, penetrating sealer formulated to rejuvenate worn and weathered stone by darkening, enriching and highlighting the natural colour and beauty of tumbled, antique or slate products. Enhancing sealers will also darken the color of grout joints. Test the enhancer sealer on a loose piece of stone or in a small inconspicuous area to ensure desired effect before full application.



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Penetrating sealers are generally not effective protection against weather damage or spalling (review manufacturer information).

Always read the product label to ensure any product is safe for use on your stone. If you are unsure about the suitability of a product, contact a professional or the sealer manufacturer for clarification.

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