



Most Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Natural Stone?

“Natural Stone” refers to a number of products quarried from the earth, used over many thousands of years as building materials and decorative enhancements. These products include Granite, Marble, Limestone, Travertine, Slate, Quartzite, Sandstone, Onyx, and others. They are more than just rocks – natural stone is hand selected from the best, most consistent sources for durability and beauty.

Natural stone products differ in composition, color, and texture even among pieces from the same source. This is usually considered a benefit, lending itself to one of a kind designs and distinctive, dramatic applications.

2. What are the different kinds of Natural Stone?

Natural Stone products include Granite, Marble, Limestone, Travertine, Slate, Quartzite, Sandstone, and Onyx.

- **Granite**
For maintenance-free elegance and durability, granite is unmatched. It is the hardest of all structural stones, with amazing variety of mineral-rich colors and natural patterns. Granite products are ideal for flooring, countertops, vanities and decorative exterior applications.
- **Marble**
Prized for its timeless style, texture and high-gloss polish along with a rich palette of beautiful colors, marble has a place anywhere in the home. Often seen as a symbol of luxury, modern technology brings beautiful marble products even to budget-conscious homeowners.
- **Slate**
Formed over thousands of years of sedimentary deposit and compression, slate splits naturally into beautifully textured layers. The various shades of slate products – brown, yellow, dark gray, pink, lavender and more – may even occur within the same piece of stone. Durable and stain-resistant, slate products are often used for flooring, cladding and landscaping.
- **Quartzite**
Shimmering and sparkling with tiny quartz crystals, Quartz is a rock similar to slate with a medium grained texture and incredible durability. Quartzite is widely used for wall veneers and decorative tiles. A naturally non-skid texture makes it a perfect candidate for flooring indoors and out, including areas with heavy traffic and exposure to the elements
- **Sandstone**
With a uniform texture, an appealing variety of colors and finishes, and weather resistant durability, it's easy to see why sandstone products have been used for thousands of years for walls, floors, and pavers. As with other types of rock, its variations result from differing mineral composition – there's a sandstone product to match any décor



- **Limestone**
The muted, soft tones of limestone are perfect for today's casual and comfortable lifestyles. Available in hues of soft beige and tan, either polished or honed, limestone products are ideal for bathrooms, fireplaces, countertops and flooring in low-traffic, informal areas.
- **Travertine**
Valued for its banded, pitted “distressed” appearance, travertine adds rich, distinctive character to a variety of indoor and outdoor building projects. Its patterns and veining effects were formed by hot spring water percolating through underground limestone. When used for interior applications, travertine is often filled with cement, grout or resin and sealed to create a smooth, stain-resistant surface
- **Onyx**
A translucent stone with a glossy, polished surface, onyx is composed of crystalline silica and closely related to agate, a semi-precious stone. Often found in caves, onyx is formed by the slow flow of cold, carbonated spring water. Onyx is available in pastel shades of yellow, brown, green, orange, and white

3. How Natural Stone tiles differ from Ceramic tiles?

The most important difference is this – Natural Stone is a product of nature, and Ceramics are man-made. Most man-made materials cannot compare in durability to natural ones. While damaged ceramic tiles usually need replacing, natural stone usually needs minimal restoration if stained or scratched.

4. Where in my home can I use natural stones?

Natural Stone can be used on nearly every surface both inside and outside the home, including floors, kitchen countertops, vanity tops, bathrooms, patios, walkways, fireplaces, facades, wall cladding, and garden landscaping.

5. Why can some stones not be used for exterior applications?

Some types of stone are better suited for interior applications than exterior because they cannot withstand harsh weather extremes and may crack, crumble, or fade. Also, stones with naturally slip-resistant surfaces are better for outdoor walkways or patios than those with smooth, polished surfaces. Some multicolored slates bleed color upon contact with water.

6. What are different kinds of Stone finishes?

The different finishes of Natural Stones are:

- **Natural Cleft**
Unique to slate, it has a slightly uneven surface that is still usable for flooring. One side (back side) can be gauged to facilitate ease of “thin set” installation.
- **Polished**
Grinding, sanding, and buffing produces a high gloss, mirror-like surface.



- **Honed**
Grinding and sanding produces a smooth, yet not glossy finish. This is best for low maintenance, high traffic applications.
- **Tumbled**
Tumbling stones in a solution of sand, water and mild acid creates an old world, weathered look.
- **Gauged vs. Ungauged**
Slate is cleft out of blocks to form tiles. When it is cleft by machine or saw, it is gauged because a uniform thickness is formed. Ungauged stone is hand-cleft and its thickness may vary up to 5/8 of an inch.

7. Why are Travertines filled or unfilled?

Travertine is characterized by the presence of many tiny holes, caused by trapped gas bubbles during its formation. This creates a porous, uneven surface, which is referred to as Unfilled Travertine. When these cavities are filled with cement or another material, the result is called Filled Travertine and may be honed and polished to provide a uniform surface.

8. Is the sizing always exact in tumbled material?

Tumbled stone pieces are intended to produce a rustic, old-world look. Therefore, they are not created with precision and may vary slightly in size. Some pieces may have large chips on the edges or may have a corner missing. Care must be taken to ensure an even surface when installing tumbled stone flooring.

9. Can I specify the exact stone color I want?

Granite, marble, and slate may be available in nearly any color, so it may be possible to specify stone color, with some tolerance for shade differences. Not all stones are available in all colors, however. Travertines, for example, are only found in shades of beige, yellow, and gold.

10. How much variation can I expect from the sample of the stone shown?

Each stone is unique, and some types of stone display more variation between the pieces than others. Granites show little variation in color, but may have differing patterns and grain density. Slates tend to show a wide variation in color, even within the same pallet of stone.

11. What is thickness tolerance for different types of stone?

Thickness tolerance varies from stone to stone. Slates generally have a tolerance of 0.38", and granite tiles have a tolerance of 0.06".

12. What is blending? When is blending recommended?



Because stone is a natural product, there is always some variation within a selection. By sorting out the stone tiles before installing, it is possible to place the tiles on the surface before installing, blending the varying colors, grain, and veining as desired.

13. What are general recommendations for installation?

- Open all boxes and mix up all the pieces before installation. This will help in an even distribution of the variation.
- White thin-set or mortar is recommended for all limestone, tumbled, antiquated stones, and light colored marble and granite.
- A good installer knows that green marble and some stones require water free epoxy thin-set.
- When stone is installed on a concrete slab at ground level, ensure that a proper moisture barrier is in place prior to installation.

14. Can installer fill the travertine with grouts?

When travertine is filled at the factory or at the time of installation, the fill can work its way out of the spaces. Normal maintenance may involve re-filling these voids

15. What are care and maintenance of the stone products are recommended?

Stone surfaces are very easy to maintain. Clean stone floors with warm water and a mild liquid soap. Never use acid cleansers or abrasive chemicals on stone. Natural stone should be sealed after installation and every one to two years thereafter, depending on its application.

16. What is an impregnator sealer? How does it help stone?

Impregnator sealer consists of microscopic balls of silicone that attach themselves to crevices inside the stone. These balls become a permanent part of the stone, and act as a waterproof shield.

17. How often should a sealer be applied?

When applied for the first time, at least 2 to 3 coatings are recommended. Thereafter, every 1 to 2 years depending upon the usage of the stone, the sealer coats should be applied.