

Clean Grout Freshens Up Your Floors

Tile is one of the easiest surfaces to clean in your home due to its durable, non-porous nature. However, what about the concrete mixture in between these tiles? This grout is porous, which means it is not stain-proof or waterproof. If this material becomes tarnished it can ruin the entire look of your flooring, countertop, or shower. Maybe yours is dark and can hide the blemishes for awhile. Or maybe it is protected with a special sealer, which can prevent against dirt and stains for some time before needing another application. However, there is no avoiding the truth: it has to be cleaned occasionally in order to restore the original appearance of your tile surface.

The Best Solution

If you use homemade cleaning solutions and supplies, you'll certainly have clean grout. However, this is only a temporary answer; you'll have to do the chore every year to keep your floors looking nice. So the most thorough way to clean grout is to hire a professional who has the proper high-powered equipment to tackle the job. Steam cleaning is a new technology that uses high-pressure water vapor to clean grout. These machines remove dirt, grease, and stains while avoiding the use of harsh chemicals which can harm your floors over time. Plus, this process also provides a deeper grout cleaning by removing mold and mildew, therefore leaving your grout not only sparkling, but sanitary as well.

Homemade Solutions

For smaller areas or light stains, you may you decide to do the job yourself. If so, you'll only need a few household tools. Wear a sturdy pair of rubber gloves and buy a small brush that can get in between the tiles (often a cheap toothbrush will do the trick). The real dilemma comes when deciding the best form of grout cleaning solution since there are several theories out there about which makes for the best cleaner. You can be creative by using baking soda with a small amount of vinegar in it. You can use bleach as long as you have extra-light colored grout. But the safest answer is to buy special pH-balanced products from flooring companies that ensure against discoloration. You may want to consult a professional about what would work best for your particular tile. Depending on whether the surface is ceramic, porcelain, or brick will determine which type of solution will work most effectively with the least amount of damage.

Finish the Job

Since these grout cleaning solutions can be a bit strong, lay down a drop cloth over unprotected areas (like nearby carpet) and open a window to circulate the air. First, pour the solution over the surface and allow it to sit for several moments. Then, with your toothbrush, scrub the areas in between the tile as thoroughly as you can. Finally, wash away the solution with fresh water. Afterwards, this clean grout may appear stain-free, but make sure it completely dries before coming to this decision: wet concrete is dark and can hide remaining stains. Let it air-dry and then come back to the area later to see if blemishes still appear; if so, repeat this process until they're totally removed. ■

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