

Sealing Travertine Before or After Grouting

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Even after reading the other Q&As, I'm afraid I'm not clear about sealing/not sealing travertine, and also when in the process it should happen. I've just had travertine tiles laid and grouted in the foyer (caramel-coloured stone and grey grout). The grout has, of course, got into every nook and cranny in the stone and I think it has given the stone a grey, dirty look. The store that sold me the tile said my tiler should have sealed it before grouting it, because the absorbent stone has now been stained by the grout. In your experience, is that true? The same tile is on the fireplace hearth waiting to be grouted. So: Should I seal the hearth tiles before grouting? Would it be worthwhile to use a grout haze cleanup product (I know Aquamix makes one) on the already grouted tile in the foyer before sealing it? If you're going to recommend not sealing anything, what about the grout lines; aren't they always supposed to be sealed? Many thanks.

Dear Nancy:

" The store that sold me the tile said my tiler should have sealed it before grouting it, because the absorbent stone has now been stained by the grout. In your experience, is that true?"

No, it is not true. However, you never told me how your travertine is finished: Polished? Honed and filled? Honed and unfilled? Tumbled? This *is* important to know, although my answer wouldn't change much.

" So: Should I seal the hearth tiles before grouting?"

No. A sealer for stone makes the lousiest grout release product that you can think of. You could use a specific grout release product. Makes sense, don't it?... :-)

" Would it be worthwhile to use a grout haze cleanup product (I know Aquamix makes one) on the already grouted tile in the foyer before sealing it?"

My understanding is that the product that you mentioned is on the acidic side, because it was formulated to remove grout film from ceramic and porcelain tiles. I may be wrong, but if this is the case, you could not use it on travertine. So, make sure that is not just for tiles. The label should specify that, and if it doesn't, demand the dealer to show you the MSDS of the product. Read the list of ingredients and its pH value. If an acid is listed and the pH is below 7, you can't use it. As an alternative, MB-3 will do the job and is indeed rated "for natural stone".

" If you're going to recommend not sealing anything"

First, travertine is not very porous. Second ask yourself: *"What kind of chances do I have to spill coffee or cooking oil on my floor without realizing it?"* The honest answer to that will tell you how bad you need to seal your stone with an impregnator like MB-4.

"what about the grout lines; aren't they always supposed to be sealed?"

The last time I checked, there was no law that was making the sealing of the grout mandatory... :-)

Up until a short 20 years ago, nobody knew anything about impregnating sealers and it never occurred to anybody that grout *must* be sealed, or else. Now, after the "sealing cult" took foot and became a "new religion", it appears that not sealing grout would askew the harmonic convergence of the universe! :-)

Ask yourself the same question above and you will know what to do.

May I ask you now to please read and e-sign our Statement of Purpose at: <http://www.marblecleaning.org/purpose.htm> ? J

Ciao and good luck,

Maurizio Bertoli