

What are the differences between each type of stone? What should you know?

Limestone - Limestone is formed over millions of years from calcium rich remains from bodies of water. These remains are compacted into the limestone we see today by immense mechanical pressure created by millions of years of continual sedimentary deposits upon one another. Noticeable features of limestone include a typically smooth, honed surface, occasional pits, the appearance of fossils, shells and other bone like material and spots or streaks of calcium based deposits.

Marble - Marble is derived from limestone that has been crushed and heated under the earth's pressure making it crystallize. This process results in a harder, denser stone capable of taking a polish. When marble is being crystallized, different minerals seep into the stone creating the colors and characteristics that we see today. Noticeable features of marble include a polished surface, crystalline grain and veins of varied, vibrant colors. Marble may be the most colorful and glamorous of the stones. Its hardness and durability lends itself to most interior applications and some exterior decoration. Proper care and maintenance will keep the remarkable sheen and polish.

Travertine - Travertine is derived from limestone that has been heated and then pushed through the earth's crust by hydraulic pressure (water). Hot springs and geysers are good locations to find travertine stone. Travertine has a layered appearance. Another of travertine's characteristics is that it has many holes, caused by water action, which may be filled at the factory or left unfilled, allowing the consumer to select a grout color to fill it with. Its surface may be honed or polished. Travertine typically has earth-colored tones. Travertine has a hardness that is similar to marble. Unlike most colorful marbles, travertines are often have earthy colors and earthy characteristics. These earthy elements allow for a remarkable number of surface scratches and dirt to remain unseen by the casual observer.

Granite - Granite is an igneous stone that is composed of quartz, feldspar, mica, and usually hornblende. It is derived from magma that cooled beneath the earth's surface. The addition of minerals into the cooling stone gives granite its wide array of colors and crystalline textures. Granite is perhaps one of the most consistently textured stones when one typically matches the next. Other features of granite include crystalline structure, vibrant coloring and sometimes waviness due to folding of granite upon itself during cooling. Granite is considered the hardest of all natural stone used for interior and exterior decor and naturally resistant to acid etching, scratching and is highly heat resistant. Two of the most popular granite finishes are polished and flamed. Honed is also becoming increasingly popular. Granite provides for an ageless, virtually indestructible floor, counter and wall coverings.

Slate - Slate is a fine grained stone derived from shale which itself metamorphosed through heat and pressure around beds of clay. The shale was further compacted and folded upon itself to form slate. The layers of slate are split when quarried producing a natural cleft surface of varying thickness. Slate is considered highly moisture resistant and hence is used on occasion as roofing shingles. It typically has a cleft surface and comes in a variety of colors. As it wears, slate can potentially slightly flake. The beauty of slate is widely varied surface, texture and color, its water and staining resistance and innate slip resistance.

What do the different finishes of stone mean?

Polished - The surface is glossy and smooth. This is achieved by grinding the surface of stone with finer abrasive grits until the crystal facets on the surface are perfectly flat. No waxes or chemicals are used to achieve this look. The stone's porous nature remains unchanged, which allows for the absorption of liquids (more or less depending on the type of stone). A polished stone may absorb more slowly because fewer pores are exposed per square inch. Not all stones may be polished.

Honed - The surface has little sheen and is smooth. Fine powder abrasives are not used to create this finish. Instead, coarser abrasives, such as diamonds are used. Honed and polished stones will be nearly equally slippery when wet! Water provides a cushion that allows you to slide across a smooth surface.

Tumbled - The surface is roughly honed and will contain chips and scratches. The edges are worn and rounded and occasionally chipped. The tumbling process was designed to give new stone the appearance of being older and worn over hundreds of years. The maintenance of tumbled stone is much lower as scratches and wear will only enhance its appearance. Sealers still need to be used but daily dusting and mopping can be overlooked as the surface will hide these normal wear issues. The tumbled look is achieved by placing stone and various abrasives sands into a large vat and then all the items are vibrated and shaken until the desired effect has been achieved.

Sand Blasted - The surface is rough with dull to no sheen. A high powered sprayer pelts the surface with water and abrasives making the stone rougher in texture and appearance.

Flamed - Extremely rough surface with no sheen. A high temperature flame heats the surface until the crystals burst leaving a rough surface. It is typically used in high traffic areas to provide slip resistance and lower maintenance costs.

Brush Hammered - The surface is roughly spotted. A blunt pounding to the surface of the stone provides a rough texture.

Why Choose Stone?

Unlike its ceramic and porcelain counterparts, if stone has not been cared for properly, it can sometimes be re-polished to make it look new again. Although you have to seal it to prevent staining, this is an easy thing that anyone can do. Stone creates an ageless classic look that will be difficult to tire of. It does require proper care and maintenance to maintain its beauty.

What are the drawbacks to stone?

Stone has a great variety of color from stone to stone. Mother nature creates it, so each piece will be different from the next. Where you may see a great deal of veining on one stone, you may see none in another. What you see as a sample, will probably not be exactly what you get. Some stones, such as travertine, are more uniform. Some stones, such as some slates, are so highly varied in color that you

would not believe they are the same color! It does also require different maintenance from porcelain and ceramic tile that must be considered when purchasing.