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IMPORTANT INFORMATION PLEASE READ

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1. Precautions:

- During installation process and with all handling of the tile, be careful not to damage the finished surface or corners of the tiles.
- Encaustic Cement tile is a handmade artisanal product and as such can vary slightly in color and design from tile to tile. It is best to take this into account when setting the tile and to mix tile from several boxes to obtain the most beautiful result.
- Raw, unsealed cement tile can easily absorb moisture and dirt prior to sealing. In order to prevent permanent water/moisture stains, do not allow tiles to become wet prior to installing and sealing. Similarly, do not pre-seal prior to setting the tile to avoid trapping moisture in the tile. Also avoid marking the tile with pencil or pen and any dirt contamination from dirty hands or shoes prior to sealing.
- Tiles must be completely clean and dry prior to applying each coat of sealant. (See cleaning below.)
- Always do a trial of each sealant used on a single unused experimental tile before applying to the whole floor.
- Avoid installation in direct sun or in very hot weather.

2. Arranging the Tile

- Using graph paper, where each square is one tile, create a plan for the floor.
- Place chalk lines on the floor to create grid lines, however be careful not to contaminate the tile with chalk.
- Starting in the center of the floor, set at least one vertical and one horizontal row of tiles (without adhesive) to insure your plan is correct.
- Be careful to note the exact orientation of the tiles to create the correct pattern in the design.
- To cut tiles, avoid chipping by using a sharp diamond blade with water.

3. Setting the Tile

- Ensure that each tile is unbroken and completely free of dirt, chalk, pencil lines or other contaminants.
- Prepare the thinset mortar. Do not over-thin. Mortar should be thick enough to support a trowel or knife.
- The backs of each tile must be wiped and wetted before setting to obtain proper bonding with the thinset. Do this by briefly dipping the tile into a bucket of clean water, then set into a second container to drain. Do not let the tiles stand in water.
- Using a ½" notched trowel, apply thinset to a two square foot area at a time.
- No spacers are required. Each tile should be set very close to the others with only a 1/8" grout line between them.
- Press each tile firmly with your clean hands (Using a mallet may crack the tile).
- As you proceed, follow the chalk lines and continually watch to keep tiles (and patterns) aligned and level.

3. Cleaning and Drying the tile after Installation

- Allow the tile to stand for 24 hours (or until dry in a humid climate).
- If there are any remaining residues, you can use a fine grain (220) sandpaper to lightly buff them out, then remove the dust with a clean wet sponge. Do not allow water to sit on the tile as cement tiles will absorb water until sealed.
- Only use mild (pH neutral) detergents such as oxyclean or Hydrogen Peroxide to remove stains. Never use vinegar, other acids or alkaline products.
- ALLOW TILE TO DRY COMPLETELY. During drying cover with a breathable protective product such as Ramboard to prevent contamination. Do not attempt to apply any finishes until the tile is *completely clean and DRY*. Applying sealer before the tile is completely dry can result in a whitening that dulls the pattern and cannot be removed. To avoid permanently damaging your tile, never turn a sub-floor heating system on while tile is drying.

4. Applying Grout-Release Sealant

- Cement tiles do not come pre-sealed. Because it is so important not to contaminate the surface of the tile with grout, we recommend using a grout release sealant (like VLT NanoSealant) prior to grouting. This makes it easy to remove any excess grout residue prior to applying a final sealant so that it doesn't mar the final finish.
- Only apply the sealant if the tile surface is CLEAN and DRY.
- For best results apply several thin coats rather than a single thick coat. Use a pad applicator from the paint department of most hardware stores.
- Use a light, gliding touch, do not let the sealant pool on the tile as it will prevent uniform drying.
- Refrain from going back over an area you have already sealed until it is fully dry.
- Allow the tile to cure a minimum of 24 hours before grouting. Allowing 48 hours will produce a harder finish

5. Applying Grout

- NOTE: Do not use black or other dark color or dyed grouts unless it matches the color of your tile, as they can permanently stain your tile! If your cement tile is light colored, we recommend using only un-tinted, white or off-white grout. To be safe, try your grout on a sample piece of unused finished tile to make sure it is a good color match and will not stain the tile.
- Do not grout until the tile has cured at least 24-48 hours and is completely dry.
- Traditionally, encaustic cement tiles are set very close together with a 1/8" grout line. Mix the grout to a slightly thin, but not watery consistency. Using a squeegee or grout float, apply it to a two square foot section at a time. Repeat in 30 minutes if needed.
- Immediately clean up any remaining grout using a soft sponge and clean water. Do not wipe along the grout line as it may pull the grout out.
- Allow to dry for a minimum of 24 hours before apply the top coat sealer.

6. Applying Final Sealant

- As before, ensure that the tile is DRY and CLEAN. The top coat sealant will permanently seal any leftover contamination, dirt, etc. onto the surface of the tile.
- We recommend using NanoSealant because it is suitable for both interior and exterior applications and is UV stable.
- Apply as you did with the other coat, spreading the sealant in thin even coats without pressure. Again, refrain from going back over an area you have covered until it is completely dry as this will mar or streak the finish.
- For maximum curing, allow the floor to cure for a full 48 hours.

7. Routine Maintenance

- Clean the floor regularly with a mild detergent—only use pH neutral products. Instruct cleaning staff that no acids (including vinegar) or alkaline products should be used.
- Often a dusting type mop is all that is required between deep cleanings.
- To remove grease or other stains, apply a small amount of hydrogen peroxide onto a soft clean cloth, apply it to the stain and let it remain for a few minutes.
- Never use a buffer or abrasive pad as these will damage the tile.
- Heavy traffic areas may need more frequent maintenance and resealing. The tiles will develop a natural patina over time. To minimize wear, use large entry mats or rugs to minimize bringing abrasive materials onto the floor surface. Over time, high traffic areas can be re-sealed with a thin coat of sealer.

Note: You and your installer are responsible for ensuring proper installation and sealing of the tiles. Mexican Tile Designs assumes no responsibility for tile once it is purchased and shipped. These instructions are offered as helpful guidelines. Mexican Tile Designs is not responsible for any installation, sealing, grouting or maintenance errors.