



CLEAN AS A WHISTLE

PROFESSIONAL CLEANERS OF STONE FLOORS, RUGS, CARPETS AND UPHOLSTERY

Consumer's Guide To Stone, Tile & Grout Care

This short guide will help you discover:

- The 4 Basic Types of Stone
- 6 Different Surface Finishes
- 7 Common Problems
- Important Considerations When Choosing A New Stone Floor
- Why Does Stone Shine
- The 4 Basic Types Of Tile
- How To Deal With Ugly Dirty Grout Lines
- 3 Reasons To Have A Relationship With A Professional Floor Care Company
- 4 Potential Rip-Offs
- 4 Costly Misconceptions About Stone & Tile Floor Cleaning
- 7 Mistakes To Avoid When Choosing a Floor Care Company
- 4 Steps To A Fresh, Clean Floor
- 100% No-Risk Guarantee

Provided as an educational guide by Clean as a Whistle, specialists in modern and historic stone care and restoration.

There is no other cleaning company that cares so much, that cleans so well and guarantees every square feet of our cleaning.

The Four Basic Types Of Stone

For practical purposes we can divide basic stone types into four. They are Sedimentary, Metamorphic, Igneous and Manufactured.

In simple terms the stones types are as follows:

Sedimentary stone is made up from tiny particles of stone along with organic materials from both plants and animals which have been compressed and bonded together usually under water. You can usually visually make out the layers. Both **Sandstone** and **Limestone** are sedimentary stones.

Metamorphic stone is formed by the changing of one type of stone into another. The explanation is that high heat, high pressure and most often hot mineral rich liquids combined in the right situations can alter both sedimentary and igneous rocks atom by atom into a new stone. So for example, Limestone becomes marble. **Marble** and **Slate** are metamorphic stones.

When molten rock (magma), usually volcanic, cools it crystallises and solidifies and it becomes *Igneous* rock. Hard stone such as **Granite** is igneous.

Manufactured covers products made from dust and clay and includes such items as **Terracotta**, **Quarry tiles**, **Porcelain** and **Terrazzo**. In other words all the basic material came from the ground but we humans have re-formed them into usable items. The exception is cultured or faux marble which is a mix of resins that are painted or mixed with paint to look like marble.

Six Different Surface Finishes

Various types of surfaces are available for the many types of stone today. Surfaces are fabricated by the manufacturer or supplier when the stone is ordered:



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1. A **honed surface** provides a flat to low sheen gloss, though different levels of gloss can be selected. This surface is very smooth and often very porous. Honed floors should be protected with a penetrating sealer because of their wide-open pores. Honed stone colours are not as vibrant as polished stone.
2. A **polished surface** is glossy and wears away because of foot traffic and improper maintenance. This surface is smooth and not very porous. The reflectivity of polished crystals brings out the brilliant colours and grains of natural stone. The shine comes from the natural reflection of the stone's crystals. The polish comes from polishing bricks and polishing powders used during fabrication. The shine is from the crystals, or prisms, of the stone drawing light in from above and reflecting the colour of the stone out. So, if a stone floor looks dull, it's because the crystals are dull. Similarly, a scratch in a polished piece of marble or granite is visible because it's actually a line of crushed, or dulled, crystals.
3. A **flamed surface** is rough and develops through intense heat. During fabrication, the stone is heated and the crystals pop to form the roughness. This surface is very porous and must be treated with a stone protectant.
4. A **tumbled surface** has a slightly rough texture that results from tumbling small pieces of marble, limestone and granite to achieve an archaic or worn appearance. This surface often requires application of a stone enhancer to bring out the colours.
5. A **sand-blasted surface** results from a pressurised flow of sand and water sprayed across the stone that provides a textured surface with a matte finish.
6. A **bush-hammered surface** results from a pounding action that develops a textured surface. The degree of roughness can be altered in accordance with customer's requirements.

7 Common Problems

The most common problems are:

1. Loss of Shine
2. Uneven Tile Lippage (not laid flat)
3. Efflorescence (salts coming through the surface)
4. Staining
5. Etching (scratches)
6. Spalling (cracks below the surface)
7. Yellowing

In each case it is necessary to seek professional advice on whether the problem can be rectified or whether replacement is the only option.

Thinking Of Choosing A New Stone Floor?

Then consider the following:

Hard stones such as granite work best for high traffic areas in terms of durability.

Softer stones such as marble are still practical in most domestic situations.

Soft stones like limestone will often wear well in these areas if correctly sealed, however, more often than not they aren't. The softer the stone, the less it is suitable for usage in floor in general.

Do not have unrealistic expectations. Too often a stone that is meant to only maintain a honed appearance is put down in an area that would be better suited to a high gloss finish. When this occurs, you may be able to have it sealed with an enhancing penetrating seal which will provide a degree of refraction. The only other solution in most cases is to use a topical coating to achieve this gloss. There are, however, disadvantages to doing this.



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Why Does Stone Shine?

When stone becomes dull and scratched, it obviously loses its shine. It now requires to be refinished and polished for it to regain the shine it originally had. Why does stone shine, and how can a lost shine be recovered?

First of all consider where we get stone. A number of methods are used to extract it from the earth. These include explosives, amazing saws and highly specialised equipment. It comes out in a raw block form. Sometimes this is extremely large and requires cutting into smaller more manageable pieces which are then sliced to produce the sections we call slabs. The slabs are then processed depending on the final use of the stone. It is at this stage that a shine is first achieved.

Nowadays the transformation may use some very expensive and sophisticated equipment but it still uses a process that goes back into history. Similar to the process used to sand wood, the surface is rubbed with a coarse abrasive grit, followed by finer and finer grits until the stone becomes smooth. The scratches left behind from one grit are removed by the next, creating finer and finer scratches. The process continues until the scratches are microscopic. This process of abrading the surface gradually produces an extremely smooth surface and this allows the stone to develop some reflectivity. This optical property is similar to that observed on a pond on a still day.

As long as the surface is calm the surface is reflective but if the wind gets up and disturbs the surface the reflectivity disappears. To make a dull stone shine we must follow the same principle. Remove the scratches to make the surface smooth and the reflectivity will return.

Although simple in principle, to achieve the necessary degree of smoothness requires techniques and specialist knowledge which come from training, practise and experience.

The 4 Basic Types Of Tile

Ceramic Tile - is a manufactured clay fired material. Glazed ceramic tile (single-fired, double-fired, etc...) does not normally require any protective treatment. It is the glaze itself that gives the tile its excellent protection and resistance to the absorption of dirt. Many of the new ceramic tiles in today's market are manufactured to look like real stone; these imitations are quite impressive and can fool many uninformed hard surface cleaning firms. As a general rule the 'cleanability' of ceramic tile is outstanding, and the process is generally relatively simple. Professional cleaning and sealing will restore the tile to a like-new condition.

Porcelain Tile - is a very hard material that is particularly resistant to chemical agents, scratches, freezing and the absorption of water. Porcelain is ideal for paving floors in public places such as restaurants, airports, schools, hospitals and shopping centres. It has also more recently begun to be used in residential applications. Porcelain tile can be given a polished surface industrially. This produces the "polished version" with its mirror-like shine. However, unlike the "natural" or unpolished versions, this is more likely to mark. It can even be honed and polished, but this is usually a very difficult and time consuming process.

Quarry Tile & Paver Brick - Quarry Tiles are an unglazed ceramic material. They are particularly well suited for exterior paving due to low moisture absorption and resistance to freezing (the high baking temperatures and high quality of clay used in manufacturing, along with other materials make this type of floor one of the most durable on the market today). There is no particular waiting time before treating these materials because they are not generally affected by 'blooms', and their low absorbency allows for rapid drying. In both types, protecting treatments should only be carried out when the floor is completely dry. There are different products and processes for these materials according to whether they are laid indoors or out.

Terracotta Tile or Saltillo Tile - is one of the oldest ceramic materials made by man. This type of tile is created by mixing clay and water, leaving it to dry naturally and finally baking it in a kiln. Saltillo Tile has



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particular characteristics that demand special treatment. The unique properties exist physically (with absorption), mechanically (with special finishes), and compositionally (with different types of clay).

Sick And Tired Of Ugly Grout?

- Just about to give up on your dirty tiles and grout?
- Sure they will never look good again?
- Considering ripping them up and replacing?

Now, there is an alternative. Not only will Clean as a Whistle make your tiles and grout look new, they will be able to help you *keep them* looking new. Grout causes all sorts of problems because it's not only recessed but very porous. Before long, trapped particles of soils, dirt and bacteria turn your clean grout lines into smelly dirt valleys.

Using the very latest materials, techniques and equipment we will remove any smells and restore your tile and grout. Sometimes there is pre-existing damage which might require attention and repair. There are also situations where the grout will not respond to provide the clean line required but there is never reason to despair because we have methods to improve the colour of your grout. Where cleaning alone is sufficient another integral part of our process is to seal the grout to protect it from future day to day dirt and spills.

Our audit is always required, as there may be occasions where it is not possible to be sure whether cleaning alone is sufficient. The purpose of our free audit is to inspect, test and report what may be required. A written and costed proposal is supplied. Where there are options, or if there is any question of alternative work being required this is also detailed, explained and costed. Call us today on 07736904186 for a free audit and estimate.

3 Reasons To Have A Relationship With A Professional Hard Surface Floor Care Company

REASON No.1: MAINTENANCE

The floors need to be maintained properly. Allowing yourself to become victimised by uneducated, uninformed, or sometimes downright unscrupulous floor care companies certainly can have a negative affect on you. When an installation doesn't wear or clean well, you may assume that the product is defective when it may simply need to be maintained professionally. We will help you keep your floors looking their best at all times.

REASON No.2: KNOWING YOUR FLOOR AND ITS NEEDS

You need to know how to best take care of your Natural or manufactured Floors. Many installations are permanently damaged due to a client's lack of knowledge about maintenance. Clean as a Whistle offers free information to you — just by asking. We also publish newsletters, tips, and are available for free information over the telephone.

REASON No.3: PROBLEM SOLVING

We routinely solve unusual and difficult soiling conditions; therefore, you can be sure we will give you unbiased advice and constructive help.

How To Avoid 4 Stone And Tile Care Rip-Offs

RIP-OFF No.1: UNBELIEVABLY LOW PRICE.

To some degree, all of us are attracted by low price because we want to work within a budget. But some floor care technicians use price as the 'bait' for their false and misleading advertising. They offer a cheap price, usually suggesting that cleaning alone is sufficient — and then, once they're in your home, they 'switch' by pressuring you into buying 'add-ons.' They may then tell you that it would be better to seal but at an extra cost. It's almost as if you were buying a car and found that the dealer was charging



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you extra for the tyres and steering wheel! Tile care is not as cheap as some unethical cleaners would like you to believe ... but using them can become very costly for you!

RIP-OFF No.2: UNETHICAL BAIT AND SWITCH TACTIC'S.

In addition to just 'switching price' some do this with the cleaning system. Floors require at the very least, deep cleaning prior to whichever method of finishing they may require to give the best appearance. Unfortunately, unethical cleaners often use processes as a bait and switch technique. Here's how it's done: First, you can be 'baited' with the promise of a cleaning process at an unbelievably low price. Then, when you call, they try to 'switch' you to a deeper clean or special acid treatment. If you don't fall for their switch, and you stick to their basic service, you'll likely receive poor workmanship with no guarantee.

RIP-OFF No.3: UNSUPPORTED CLAIMS: "THIS CLEANING METHOD IS THE BEST"

You'll read this in almost every ad. You'll hear this from virtually every hard floor cleaner. Remember this: The method that's best for you is the method that achieves your goal. If, for example, you want a matt finish, then a method that leaves a shiny surface is not for you. So before you choose a hard floor care company, identify YOUR objectives. Then discuss and find the method that best reaches those objectives. We are happy to arrange to visit you and discuss your floors, and give you our no obligation quote.

RIP-OFF No.4: OUTDATED BELIEFS: "CLEANING DAMAGES TO YOUR FLOORS"

There are many 'over the counter' products which can in fact reap havoc with your tiled floor. This is the very reason you are advised to use a professional, rather than trying to tackle the job yourself. Unfortunately there are also plenty of products and methods which 'so called' professionals use which can, and do, cause damage. Obviously, there are recognised methods which each cleaner may be biased towards, and each of these methods may or may not have some advantages over others. So we suggest you don't take the word of the tiler or stone tile supplier without making sure the advice is correct and based on fact. Shaw Industries, the largest floor covering manufacturer in the world, recommends only companies that are IICRC Certified. IICRC are the lead training body in the world when it comes to stone care and maintenance.

4 Costly Misconceptions About Stone And Tile Floor Cleaning

MISCONCEPTION No.1:

"Should I wait as long as possible before having my stone or tiled floor cleaned?"

No. Dirt is an abrasive, like sandpaper. Every time you step on your floor, you grind dirt into it. The soil affects the appearance of the surface and in particular, the dirt gradually collects in the grout lines transforming them into dirt valleys. While dust mopping and vacuuming helps, it's simply not enough as they are unable to reverse the situation. The longer you wait to have your floor cleaned, the more damage you do to the grout lines and the more difficult it will become to adequately restore them.

MISCONCEPTION No.2:

"The only reason to clean my stone or tiled floor is to make it look clean?"

No. It's important that a stone or tiled floor is in fact really clean (not just clean to the look). Some cleaning methods fall short of this. In the case of stone floors, the cleaning process provides an opportunity to re-protect the surface. If originally the stone was sealed and is now looking dirty it will be necessary to renew or add to the seals. If the floor was diamond polished or crystallised, and now the shine has reduced or gone, it will be necessary to repeat the process or in some cases choose a more effective and long-lasting process. Tiles are often used in areas where hygiene is of prime importance. If the tiles or even just the grout lines are dirty they are not hygienic. Not only that, they may be a source



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of malodour. If originally the tiles were sealed and now look dirty, it will be necessary to renew or add to the seals. Even if they do not require sealing, the grout lines will do. The only way for you to keep them really clean is to have them professionally sealed.

MISCONCEPTION No.3:

"Having the right equipment is all a company needs to clean my stone or tiled floor properly?"

Not true. Tile and Stone floor cleaning companies own all sorts of equipment but very few companies teach their employees how to use them properly. This is why it's important that you choose your stone care technician carefully. The best companies are those that have been certified by the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification, known as the IICRC.

MISCONCEPTION No.4:

"I should use the company that offers the lowest price?"

No. We've seen so many problems arise from lowest-bid companies, that we suggest you NEVER hire the company that just quotes the cheapest price. The two most common problems are:

- 1) The price may not be for the services you want or need performed.
- 2) The price you see advertised might not be the price you pay. Only too often many homeowners have learned that the low price they saw advertised lasted only until the cleaner got into their home. Then they were pressured into paying a lot more for a variety of add-ons.

7 Mistakes To Avoid When Choosing A Floor Care Company

MISTAKE No.1: CHOOSING A COMPANY BASED ON EQUIPMENT ALONE.

No question, your floor care cleaner needs first-rate equipment. But he also needs something else. He needs employees who are skilled at operating that equipment. Many companies purchase acceptable equipment, but very few companies teach their employees how to use them properly. The best way to know that the floor care cleaner's employees have been properly taught is to make sure the company has been certified by the IICRC. Before you choose a floor carpet cleaner, ask to see written proof of the companies and technicians IICRC certification.

MISTAKE No.2: CHOOSING A FLOOR CLEANER BASED ON LOW PRICE.

Low price could be a problem in three ways (1) Low price can be the 'bait' that attracts you but once the cleaner gets into your home he pressures you into 'switching' to a much more expensive job. (2) Low price can be for simple cleaning. Rarely does the consumer know what this means and when told, realises that to do all that is really required will cost much more. (3) Low price usually means the company has little or cheap equipment, or poorly trained staff which will not effectively clean and refinish your stone or tiled floor.

MISTAKE No.3: CHOOSING A COMPANY BASED ON A SINGLE TELEPHONE CALL.

Instead, invite their representative to your home and ask for a specific written estimate. Then you'll know exactly what the floor care company recommends — and you won't be the victim of high pressure tactics when the technician steps into your living room. If they refuse to come out I wouldn't trust them ... would you?



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MISTAKE No.4: CHOOSING A FLOOR CARE COMPANY WHO DOESN'T OFFER A FULL GUARANTEE.

In my view, every tile or floor care company should be fully accountable for its work. If you are not pleased with the job in every way, you should not have to pay for it until you are happy. Period. Not all companies offer a guarantee. Or, if they do, the guarantee may be extremely limited. Ask them if they offer a money-back guarantee and then make sure the floor care cleaner includes his guarantee in writing.

MISTAKE No.5: CHOOSING A FLOOR CARE COMPANY WITHOUT GETTING COMMENTS FROM THEIR OTHER CLIENTS.

Anyone can say anything about their past jobs. And sadly, some of what he says may not be true. Make sure you ask for references or read comments from current customers so you can depend on the floor care company and their work.

MISTAKE No.6: CHOOSING COMPANY WHO IS NOT CERTIFIED BY THE IICRC.

If your floor care contractor is not a close friend, you may not know whether he has the knowledge or experience to clean your stone, tiles and grout safely and correctly. If you want to be sure you're hiring a competent professional, make sure he is IICRC certified. The floor care technician must earn that certification through study, experience and successful completion of formal written examinations. In effect, technicians who are certified by the IICRC have earned a college degree in tile and stone care.

MISTAKE No.7: CHOOSING A FLOOR CARE CLEANER WHO IS NOT A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL CARPET CLEANERS ASSOCIATION (NCCA).

Although the NCCA is the largest trade association of carpet cleaners in the UK it is also the lead authority in hard surface floor care. So being IICRC certified will show they are trained, but additionally as members of the NCCA they must keep to a number of rules. These include:

- 1) Honest, ethical business practices
- 2) Staying current on the latest methods for floor care and restoration
- 3) Have current treatment risk & public liability insurance.

You're making a wise decision when you decide to have your stone maintained cleaned by a member of the NCCA.

4 Steps To A Fresh, Clean Floor

If you're thinking about having your floors cleaned, we encourage you to follow these four steps:

STEP No 1: Make a commitment to yourself to get your tiled or stone floors cleaned or restored. The longer they remain dirty, the more they will be damaged and the less visually pleasing they'll become. Furthermore, periodic stone and tile floor cleaning will improve and maintain your indoor environment.

STEP No 2: List your objectives. Do you want only the soil removed or do you want the grout lines sealed. Do you want to work with an honest, reputable company — or are you willing to risk working with the company that offers the lowest price — knowing that the company might not be in business tomorrow.

STEP No 3: Ask questions. The way you learn about a company is to ask specific questions and listen carefully to the answers. Here are eight tough questions to ask a floor care company before they begin their work:

1. What method of floor restoration do you recommend?
2. What type of equipment do you use to clean floors?
3. What system and methods do you recommend for my floor and why?
4. How long will your particular finish last before I will need it done again?



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5. What training have you had in tile and stone floor care?
6. Are you a member of the NCCA?
7. Are you certified by the IICRC ?

STEP No 4: Once you're satisfied that you're working with an honest, competent professional, invite them to your home and ask for an estimate in writing. This gives you the assurance that you will not later receive an unpleasant surprise.

100% No-Risk Guarantee

This is not a 'satisfaction' guarantee! I don't want you to feel 'satisfied' I want you to be super pleased - in fact, absolutely delighted - with every job we do. So every job comes with our iron clad, risk-free guarantee. What does this mean? Simply this: if you aren't pleased, we'll re-clean for FREE! We will not invoice you until you are happy. Many companies don't guarantee their work - but we feel nothing is more important than you're delighted we our work. We stand behind every job 100%. If you were ever to have any questions or concerns about any of our technicians work, please call me right away: Call [01253 594379](tel:01253594379).

Thanks Again!

...for reading through our CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO STONE, TILE & GROUT CARE. We hope you found this information helpful. If you have any questions or comments — or if you'd like us to give you a no obligation quote — please call us on 07736 904186. We do invite you to call us. We'll be happy to answer your questions - although we can't give you an estimate over the telephone, we would be delighted to come into your home and give you a free 'Healthy Stone Floor or Tile and Grout Survey'. We'll give advice on how to restore your tiles or clean your tile and grout or stone floors whether marble, limestone or slate and make them look great, and in the process make them easier to maintain... it only takes 15-minutes, then we can give you a complete written estimate for the work we recommend - without obligation of any kind. We've dedicated our business to consumer satisfaction, education and service. We'll be pleased to help you in every way. We look forward to hearing from you.