

## **Cutting and Setting Tile**

Level of Difficulty – 3-4

If you've already purchased tile, prepared the subflooring and planned your layout, you've done the hard work. Now it's time to get your hands dirty! Read through these instructions because the order of the steps below can vary depending on your project.

### **Preparing the Adhesive**

We recommend that you mix Thinset to adhere your tile to the floor. You can purchase pre-mixed tile adhesive, but it is quite expensive compared to mixing your own.

To mix thinset, you'll need a bucket that you don't care about, clean water and something to mix with. You can put a large mixing bit into your cordless or electric drill to make the job easier. If you want to work your biceps, you can hand mix.

Read the mixing instructions on your bag. You want to mix only what you can use in about a half hour. We recommend that you pour a half gallon of water into your bucket, then add thinset a little at a time to bring it to the proper consistency. There are many condiments used to describe the proper thickness., but peanut butter is what this author uses as a gauge. You want it to be thick, but not dry. When you trowel the thinset onto your surface, it must hold its shape and not round itself off as it settles.

Once mixed, set it aside for 10 minutes. Gather your tools and after 10 minutes, give it a good stir and you're ready to set tile.

### **Setting Tile**

Grab a box of tiles, your trowel and your bucket of thinset. The first tiles you set will be along the straight line that you placed on your surface. This line of tiles will become the guide for all of the remaining tiles in your project, so take care to align tiles carefully.

1. Using the flat side of your trowel, lay a coating of thinset on your subsurface. If you are using a 1/4" grooved trowel, you want to spread the thinset at least 1/4" deep.
2. Now, use the notched side of the trowel to remove some of the thinset. Hold the trowel at about a 45 degree angle and "rake" it across your bed of thinset. You should see your subsurface through where you've raked off the thinset, leaving rows of 1/4" thinset. (This process is important because you want your bed of thinset to be consistent so that your tiling project will be level.)
3. Align your tile to the line you've drawn on your subsurface. Set it into the bed of thinset and push down firmly, giving it a slight twist.
4. Verify that the tile is aligned to your straight line and lightly set your second tile alongside it. If you are using tile spacers, place two between your tiles now. Move the tile as necessary to close that gap between tiles as much as the spacers will allow. Now, press the tile firmly into place beside the first.
5. Gently remove any thinset that is between the two tiles, above the top surface of the tile.
6. Continue laying tile along your straight line by repeating steps 3-5.
7. When you've used up your thinset, or it becomes unworkable, scrape off any extra around your tiles and mix your next batch.
8. Continue laying tile, using the first row of tile with spacers to align the next row.

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9. Work from the middle, setting full tiles until you are at the end of the row and have to cut a tile to fit. To allow for expansion and contraction, tiles should be held in from walls about the thickness of the grout line. Carefully measure the cut, considering the grout line (spacer), cut the tile and lay it as you have the others.

*As a rule, all cut edges should be on the outside of the tile job. Only machine finished tile edges should be butted to other tiles.*

### **Cutting Tile**

There are several ways of cutting tiles. For straight cuts, a tile cutter or a wet saw works well. For special cuts, a combination of tools may be used.

**Tile Cutter** – This tool is affordable, simple to use and works well for cutting most ceramic tiles. Tile cutters score the tile first, then snap the tile along the scored edge. This is a great tool for beginners and advanced users alike.

**Wet Saw** – A wet saw is a great tool for any sizable tiling job. It does a good job of cutting through ceramic tile, as well as stone, marble, granite, brick, etc. This is an expensive tool and we wouldn't recommend that you purchase one unless you plan to do many tiling jobs. You can rent one by the hour. If you choose to do this, plan to do all of your cuts at once to minimize your rental time.

**Tile Nippers** – This hand tool can be used alone or in combination with a saw to clip bits of tile off a little at a time. These work well in combination with a wet saw to cut inside corners in tile.

**Rod Saw** – This hand saw works like a coping saw or hack saw and can be used to cut curves and unusual shapes.

**Drill w/Masonry Bit** – This is used to cut a hole in the center of a tile.