

How to Fix a Broken Tile

Why let one cracked or broken tile, ruin the look of your whole floor when it's simple to fix? Here's how:

1. Smooth the Surface

- Remove the old tile, adhesive and grout – without damaging the surrounding tiles. You can scrape away old grout using a grout saw, a rotary tool with a grout removal attachment or a multi-tool - which can also make the rest of the job go faster.
- Smash up the old tile with a hammer, and pry it up. Go easy or you'll crack adjoining grout joints.
- Chip away old adhesive, thinset or mortar using the hammer and chisel or a multi-tool with a scraper attachment.
- Clear the debris so you have a smooth, even surface

2. Apply the Adhesive

- You'll need adhesive made to bond the tile to the surface underneath. Mastic sets up fast, so it's great for backsplashes or wall tile – to prevent the tile from sliding down the surface. But in an area where there's a lot of moisture or pressure, use Thin Set.
- Thin Set works like mortar or cement, but only takes a thin layer to bind surfaces. Thinset in bags is best for larger projects, but the premixed type is convenient for a small floor tile repair. Add water and let it slake according to the label. It should be about as thick as toothpaste or peanut butter.
- Spread the adhesive on the bare floor, or the back of the new tile with the flat edge of a 1/4-inch notched trowel.
- Go over it with the notched edge. The ridges level out the adhesive. You need that even contact with the tile surface. Otherwise the tile will crack or loosen.

3. Set the New Tile

- To set the tile, drop it gently in place flat so that even layer of adhesive doesn't shift. You don't want to angle it into place. Line up the edges. Press down evenly so it's not seated at an angle.
- Let the adhesive cure according to the product label. Usually about 24 hours. A quick-dry Thin Set dries in about 2 hours.

4. Spread the Grout

- It's important to mix grout following the label – add too much or too little water and you won't get a strong seal. Let it stand or "slake" a few minutes to absorb the water. You can also find pre-mixed grout to take some guesswork out of this step.
- Use a grout float to work the grout into the seams. You don't want to line up your stroke with the seams – you want to go against the direction of the seam. Pull across diagonally. This way you won't pull the grout out.
- In about 15 minutes, a hazy coating develops. Wipe the surface lightly with a damp towel to remove the film.
- Wait a few hours. Buff the tile with a dry towel. Wait 24 hours before putting pressure on the tile.
- Use a grout sealant to prevent stains and water damage. And you're done.

Helpful Tips:

- Pre-mixed grout and adhesive in one is another time saver for small repairs like this.
- Follow the specific mixing, dry time and application instructions for the adhesives and grout you use.
- Wear full eye and hand protection. Tile shards are sharp. You'll want to protect your eyes and hands from flying debris.
- If you have several broken tiles – it might mean the tile was installed wrong, or the surface underneath isn't stable. You may want to call in a pro to fix the underlying problem.

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NOTE: Always follow manufacturer's recommended safety precautions and instructions for the products you use.