



## WHAT YOU NEED

### Materials

- SimpleMat tile setting mat
- Premixed grout
- Grout sealer
- Glass mosaic tile
- Tile spacers
- 2" Scotch Blue multi-surface painter's tape
- Marker
- Fine grit sandpaper
- Glass cleaner
- Mineral spirits
- DAP Aquarium Adhesive Sealant

### Tools

- Grout Float
- Sponge
- Small bucket
- Small trowel
- Scissors
- Latex or nitrile gloves
- Tape measure
- Yardstick
- Level
- Utility knife
- Safety glasses
- Step ladder
- Small drop cloths
- Terry towels
- Respirator
- Tile Nipper



## WALL PREPARATION

Before you start your tiling project, spend some time with some project prep work.









- Use a layer of cardboard or heavy duty craft paper to cover and protect countertops, nearby appliances, and window trim.
- Shut off power to any electrical outlets or light switches and remove the cover plates.
- Remove all existing tiles.
- Clean the drywall. Remove any existing wallpaper, because moisture from the mortar and grout can loosen the wallpaper adhesive over time, causing the tile to fall off.
- Rough up painted walls if needed. Use 80-grit sandpaper to rough over painted walls to ensure the adhesive is able to affix to the wall properly, being careful not to sand through the paint. Remove any dust and let the surface dry.
- Ensure the surface is level. Small dings and scratches can be covered with mastic. If dings and damage have caused uneven spots, patch as needed since SimpleMat will follow the wall surface.

## ALWAYS TEST FIRST

If there is doubt about the suitability of your tile or subsurface, test a small section to ensure a positive bond. Press the mat onto the surface in question and then remove it. If it comes off easily, ensure all contaminations are removed and surfaces are flattened. If after doing this, a bond is not achieved, use an alternative method of installation.

## TYPES OF TILES

Take some time to look in books and magazines and save a file of photos with tile you might consider for your home. Remember that tile lasts a long time, so you might shy away from trends if you're not willing to replace the tile when you grow tired of it.

	<b>Ceramic</b> Water resistant; usually texture finished; many have small lugs molded on the sides to allow you to set the tiles without spacers, for a gap of less than 1/4" ceramic tiles are available in a wide variety of shapes, colors, and sizes.
	<b>Porcelain</b> Dense, hard tiles; waterproof; usually gloss finished. Through-body color tiles show less wear because the entire tile is colored, not just the surface.
	<b>Terra-cotta and Saltillo</b> Dense, hard tiles; waterproof; usually gloss finished. Low-cost and hand-made, they have a rustic charm.
	<b>Quarry</b> Water absorbent unless sealed; resembles stone tile at a fraction of the cost, and they are usually available in a range of earthy colors.
	<b>Stone</b> Must be sealed; comes in a variety of natural minerals (such as granite, marble, slate) and finishes (such as polished, tumbled)
	<b>Glass and Mosaics</b> Used as accents to help keep project costs down; flip over the mosaics and cut through the mesh backing to create strips of accent tile in any width and length
	<b>Listellos</b> Varying sizes of patterned or decorative designs and creations; can be used as accents or to break up large areas of tile
	<b>Metal</b> Susceptible to scratching; fits well into contemporary design schemes



## ADHESIVES

The two basic types of adhesives used to mount the tiles are mastic and SimpleMat.

### Mastic

If using mastic, backerboard is the best way to set any tiles that will have direct water contact. Refer to the 1-2-3 books for information on using backerboard. With mastic, timing is important. If left untouched for too long, mastic can skim over, requiring you to scrape the skim off, discard it, and apply a fresh layer. Most mastics must set for 16 to 18 hours before grouting.

### SimpleMat

To save time, use SimpleMat:

- It can be used with any type of ceramic, porcelain, stone, or glass tile 1" x 1" or larger, or mosaic tile with mesh backing and with tile and stone up to 8" x 8" as long as the stone is less than 1/2" in thickness
- Choose SimpleMat for kitchen or bath counters, backsplashes, shower walls and tub surrounds (but not for floors, ceilings, shower floors, or outdoors).
- Simplemat is appropriate for many household surfaces, such as drywall, plywood, backerboard, concrete, painted surfaces, laminates, and existing tile surfaces.



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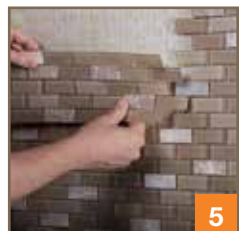
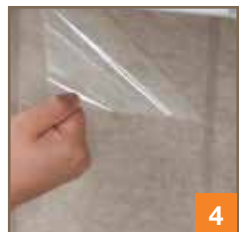
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## SIMPLEMAT: SETTING THE TILE

Setting tiles using SimpleMat is easy! Before installing the backsplash, remove any dust or grease. Use a damp sponge to wipe the walls, counters, and the backs of the tiles or stones. Be sure to allow all surfaces to dry before proceeding. Ensure that you have a flat counter or wall surface; do NOT apply to uneven surfaces.

Use the backsplash area measurement to lay the tiles out on a flat surface, using spacers if necessary. Replicate those measurements on the wall. If the space at the end is less than 1/2 of a tile, shift the center line to eliminate small tile cuts, allowing for wide, even tiles at both ends.

1. **Determine placement and cuts** Place SimpleMat in position and mark cuts, if needed. Before peeling and adhering SimpleMat, check for areas that need to have cuts made for outlets and switch plates. Cut SimpleMat with scissors or utility knife. Using a utility knife will save you from having to stop to clean the adhesive off of the scissors.
2. **Peel the backing paper from the mat.** Apply it to the wall and flatten air bubbles and creases.
3. **Smooth out the SimpleMat.** Use a grout float to smooth the mat to avoid creases or air bubbles.
4. **Remove the clear plastic from SimpleMat.**
5. **Set the Tiles.** Clean the back of the tile with a damp sponge and allow to dry. If the tile backs are not clean, they will not affix properly. Lightly set the tile into place using tile spacers, if needed. You can remove and re-affix the tile if it isn't set correctly. Spacers may not be needed, depending on the size of the tiles and the size of the desired grout lines. Press firmly to lock the tiles into place. Use the grout float to press the tiles into place.





## GROUT LINES

You get to decide how much space to leave between tiles. Here are a few guidelines:

- **Quarry tiles:** Tiles are customarily spaced  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch apart.
- **Large, uniform machine-made tiles:** Space the tiles  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch apart.
- **Large handcrafted tiles, such as saltillo:** Space the tiles  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch apart so their irregular edges are less noticeable and less problematic when laying the tile.
- **Marble and granite** Butt tiles and fill chamfered edges with unsanded grout.
- **Ceramic and porcelain:** Space tiles  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch apart.

## GROUT APPLICATION

Once your tiles are applied to SimpleMat, you can grout right away. If mixing your own grout, mix the mortar with a paddle and some water. Make sure you wear safety goggles, a dust mask, and rubber gloves, and then follow these instructions:

1. Remove any tile spacers.
2. Use the trowel to apply grout to the grout float.
3. Hold the grout float at a 45 degree angle.
4. Spread the grout completely, pushing it at an angle into each joint.
5. Remove excess grout by sweeping the grout float diagonally across the tiles at a steep angle.

## GROUT AND TILE CLEANING

Grout will set in about 5 to 15 minutes and have a putty-like consistency. When the grout cannot be dented by pressing into it with a thumbnail, clean the tiles. Using a damp sponge, wipe the tiles diagonally to clean them, rinsing the sponge frequently. Cure the grout by misting it twice a day for 3 days.

## SEALING AND FINISHING TILE

Protect your new backsplash by applying a tile and/or grout sealer after the grout has fully cured.

If you use a grout that you mix yourself, consider using Grout Shield, a grout additive that mixes with cement-based grout in place of water to provide stain resistance. It can be used indoors or outdoors and contains antimicrobial ingredients. It eliminates the need to seal the grout, and comes with a 20-year warranty.

The steps for sealing and finishing tile are as follows:

1. Apply the tile and grout cleaner with a sponge once the grout is dry.
2. Wait 48–72 hours after curing grout to apply a penetrating sealer. Scrub the surface with a stiff brush and rinse thoroughly before applying the sealer.  
A sealer protects your tile and grout from both oil and water-based stains and makes everyday clean up easier. Do NOT let excess sealer dry on glazed tiles.
3. Apply caulk between tiles and walls or other seams if necessary.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Home Depot provides many sources of information, help, and tips available for your projects.

The [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com) Web site has a How-To page with project guides with information on:

- How to Use SimpleMat Tile Setting for Easy Tile Installation
- SimpleMat Tile Setting Mat
- How to Install Tile and Backsplashes with SimpleMat Premixed Solutions

**How-To Community** This community-based site provides an opportunity for customers to ask questions of Home Depot associates and other do-it-yourselfers. Register at [community.homedepot.com](http://community.homedepot.com).

**Home Improvement 1-2-3 and Tiling 1-2-3** Both of these books have a section on tiling and *Tiling 1-2-3* includes additional creative tiling projects. These books are for sale in your store.



Check out our on-line resources, available at the click of your mouse or smart phone:

- project checklists
- how-to videos
- on-line social community
- mobile apps for iPhone, Android and Windows 7 devices (to download apps, go to [m.homedepot.com/apps](http://m.homedepot.com/apps))