

YOUR HOME AUGUST 2009

TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

Tile Choices Made Easy



Not all tiles are alike. Some are more durable and wear-resistant than others. And with so many colors and styles available, choosing one that's right for your home can be a challenge. Before you buy, here's what you need to know from the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA).

Ceramic tile is less expensive than other types and come in two styles: porcelain and

non-porcelain. Non-porcelain tile is suitable for light to moderate traffic, but it is more prone to wear. Porcelain is denser and absorbs less water than ceramic tile. It is also more wear- and damage-resistant.

The NKBA recommends that you check the tile's rating from Class 1 (no foot traffic) to Class 5 (heavy to extra heavy traffic) to determine its recommended use.

Another option is natural stone tile, which is commonly found in slate, marble, limestone, travertine and granite. Slate is a dense, tough composite available in shades of black, gray and green. It is best suited for floors, walkways and roofing, and recently has been used in kitchen countertops and wet bars.

Marble is a popular natural stone that is softer than granite. It is used most often in bathroom walls and flooring, tub decks, fireplace surrounds, furniture, sculptures and courtyards. Marble is not recommended for kitchens unless the stone is honed and sealed.

Limestone is less dense than marble or travertine. It comes in earthy colors, such as off-white, grey and beige, and it is best used for structural walls, entry walls, floors, fireplace surrounds, vanities and shower walls. However, it can stain and scratch easily, so it is not recommended for kitchen countertops and wet bars.

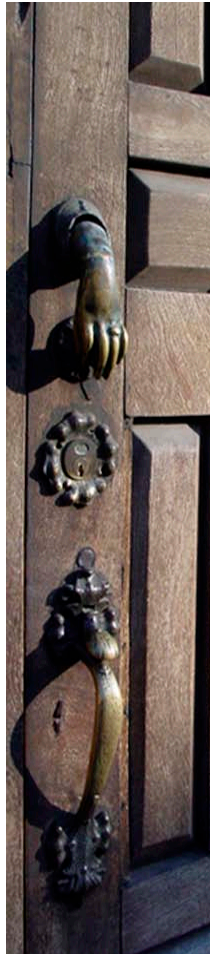
Travertine is less dense than high-grade marble and highly porous, and comes in light beige to brown. However, some cleaning products can damage the surface. Travertine is best used for entry walls, floors, vanities, shower walls, tub decks and mosaics, but not for countertops because it scratches and stains easily.

Once polished, granite can maintain its high gloss finish forever. It's also easy to clean and durable, which makes it ideal for kitchen countertops, wet bars, entry walls, floors, fireplaces and bathroom vanities.

Spruce Up Your Stoop

Whether you are preparing your home for an open house or simply want to give your front entry a makeover, you can often find low-cost solutions to update your home's appearance and give potential buyers a positive first impression. Home-improvement retailer Lowe's recommends the following quick fixes:

1. Install upgraded light fixtures and set out a new doormat.
2. Put a kickplate on the front door to add some elegance and to help prevent scuffs and dents.
3. Replace the door hardware and doorbell and coordinate the finish with your lighting and kickplate.
4. Paint the door in a bright, appealing color to create an instant focal point.
5. To dress up a plain porch and steps, stain the concrete. To give the appearance of stone, combine two stain colors.
6. Add house numbers, and choose large digits so guests can easily read them.
7. Plant small trees or shrubs. For added effect, choose something fragrant such as tea olive.
8. Flank the entry way with planters and then change out the plants each season for fresh splashes of color.
9. Add lighting along the path leading to the entry. For a more eco-friendly option, choose fixtures with solar panels. The sun charges them during the day for nighttime lighting.



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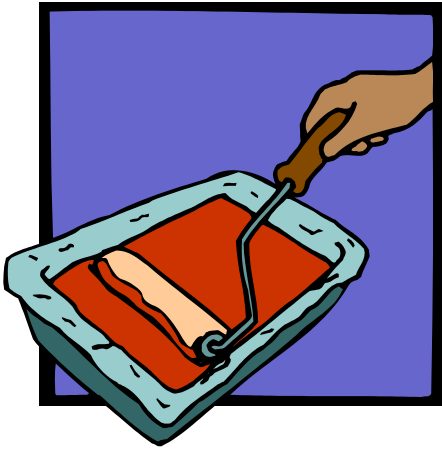
76 percent of commuters drive alone to work, while 10 percent carpool and 5 percent take public transportation, excluding taxicabs.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



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Do It Yourself or Hire a Contractor?



A recent survey by RemodelorMove.com finds that nearly two-thirds of homeowners are handling some parts of remodeling jobs on their own to save money. But doing it yourself may not always be a wise choice in the long run, according to the National Association of the Remodeling Industry. Correcting home improvement mistakes can be costly, and some contractors are unwilling to take on botched do-it-yourself projects.

So how do you know if you should do it yourself or hire a contractor? Here are some factors to consider:

Costs – Look at all the costs, including the cost of materials, time and the tools you may need. If the job doesn't turn out right, can you afford to re-do the project or correct mistakes?

Skills – Do you have all the tools, and more importantly, the skills required to do the job?

Knowledge – Have you done this work before? Do you know all the steps involved? Are you familiar with local building codes and permit requirements? Some local jurisdictions require that the work be completed by a licensed professional to meet code.

Time – Do you have the time to devote to completing the project? Always double or triple the estimated time for a DIY project, unless you are highly skilled and are familiar with the project.

Personality – Do you enjoy physical work? Do you have reliable work habits? Are you persistent and patient to see a project through to the end?

Materials – How will you obtain the materials you need?

Safety – Your health and safety comes first. Experts suggest you don't attempt major projects that could put your well being in jeopardy, such as electrical or roofing. Call a professional instead.



WORK WITH A CRS AGENT

Buying a home is one of the biggest and most emotional decisions you will ever make. So it's important to work with someone who can provide sound advice and a steady, guiding hand when you need it. That's why a CRS agent is the best person for the job.

A Certified Residential Specialist (CRS) is among the top 4 percent of all agents in the country. CRS agents have achieved a high volume of transactions and advanced training in areas such as business planning, real estate investing, marketing and technology. They must also maintain membership in the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® and abide by its Code of Ethics. Why work with anyone else when you can work with a CRS?

* DID YOU KNOW

The first observance of Labor Day is believed to have been Sept. 5, 1882 when 10,000 workers paraded through New York City.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? Please mention my name.

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