Our guide to caring for natural stone

#loveyourstone
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Congratulations you did it!

By choosing your natural stone product from mrs-stone-store, you have not only invested wisely but you’ve joined a family - a family of previous clients, technical specialists and natural stone experts whose wealth of expertise will guide you not only now - but at any time in the future should you feel you need it.

Our family of experts have produced this guide to help dispel some ‘common myths’ and provide ‘facts’ on a few simple but important steps that will not only extend but sympathetically preserve the life of your natural stone investment.
For centuries, natural stone has been used to construct and decorate everything from the simplest of dwellings to the most elaborate of castles, Egyptian palaces and Roman Baths, some of which remain intact even today in all their splendour.

Not unlike a fine wine, natural stone will age beautifully and with grace given the correct care. Using this simple guide, we will offer straightforward tips to ensure that with minimal effort, all your natural stone surfaces will stand the test of time.
Myths and Truths - Overview

Myth
‘Polished’ stone doesn’t need to be sealed!

Myth
Slate is all the same

Myth
Lines (veins) in limestone are weaknesses/cracks

Myth
Natural stone is fiddly to look after

Myth
Mild washing up liquid is fine to clean my natural stone with

Myth
Natural stone is expensive

Myth
Sealing my tiles will protect them from wear

Myth
Impregnating (breathable!) sealers will protect against acid wear
MYTH
‘Polished’ stone doesn’t need to be sealed!

TRUTH
The plain and simple answer is – All natural stone needs to be sealed! This common myth derives from the misconception that the ‘polish’ is a somehow a protective coating. The term ‘polished’ when describing a natural stone – relates to the ‘mechanical process’ applied to the tile during production to produce a high gloss finish.

MYTH
All Slate is the same

TRUTH
Slate is the geological name for a fine grained, foliated metamorphic rock that is created by the alteration of shale or mudstone by varying degrees of heat and pressure. Whilst this sounds like the myth may in fact be true, slates produced in different countries will exhibit inherent differences governed by the conditions under which it was formed. For instance, slate from Brazil will be very dense, splits very evenly and cleanly resulting in an even and consistent surface texture and therefore has small tolerances when purchased as an uncalibrated or ‘natural’ option. Slate from China or India however is not as dense and will therefore exhibit greater variance in surface texture, have greater tolerances when uncalibrated and can tend to delaminate (shale off) easily under the right conditions.

Brazilian slate is considered a much better quality when compared to slate from China or India but, as with all things ‘natural’ there are pro’s and con’s to all options. The right choice for you really depends on you and whether your decisions governed by price, look or quality.
MYTH
Lines (veins) in limestone are weaknesses/cracks!

TRUTH
During the formation of limestone, hot mineral-rich fluids were forced through the stone. When these fluids cooled, salts and minerals were left behind – this is what we call ‘veins’. Veins can be very thin, pencil-like lines or larger crystalline filled fissures which are all a naturally occurring part of the stone. The contents of these lines or fissures are generally stronger than the ‘limestone’ itself so will not mean that the tiles are weak along these points.

MYTH
Natural stone is high maintenance

TRUTH
We believe that this myth derives from the lack of knowledge either given to or gathered by customers before purchasing. The simple fact is, with a few key points that are not only easy, cost effective but you can ‘prevent rather than cure’ issues. Most of these will not only apply to natural stone surfaces but wood, terracotta and other floor coverings too, for instance:

DO
• Seal correctly, this will help prevent staining
• Blot spills as quickly as possible
• Use trivets or mats under hot cookware
• Use coasters under drinks
• Have a mat in place at entrances to the building as this will trap debris which may cause scratching
• Dry mop natural stone floors to remove debris – oscillating brushes or sharp edges on hard floor hoovers can cause issues
• Only use cleaners formulated for use on natural stone, this will prolong the life of the sealer

DON’T
• Do not use harsh, abrasive or chemical cleaners on natural stone – these can not only remove or degrade the protective sealer but can damage the stone itself
• Do not use vinegar to clean natural stone surfaces
• Do not use abrasive or scouring cleaning implements
MYTH
Washing up liquid is mild and delicate enough to clean my natural stone with without damaging it.

TRUTH
Whilst bio-degradable and other famous brands of dish washing soaps are labelled as being ‘mild’ and ‘kind to hands’ they are most definitely not an ally of the sealers used to protect natural stone surfaces. Pot washing detergents are afterall, designed to be ‘powerful degreasers’, this will generally mean that regular cleaning with a washing-up detergent will degrade and remove the very thing you have put in place to repel water and stains – leaving the stone unprotected and lack lustre.

In most cases, this will not have sounded the ‘death nell’ for your stone surface, what it does mean however is that you will need to remove any traces of sealer remaining with the appropriate product and reapply the sealer – Only this time, using the correct pH neutral routine maintenance cleaner!

MYTH
Natural stone is expensive

TRUTH
Whilst there are many different types of natural stone on the market, it is true that prices between different varieties of stones can vary owing to the quality, origin or how readily available or rare a product is – One thing you can be assured of though, is that buying from mrs-stone-store, you are taking advantage of the fantastic discounts gained from our bulk buying history.
**MYTH**

*Natural stone is so hard, it will never scratch*

**TRUTH**

This is a simple yet confusing question! Natural stones are described as being hard, medium or soft in make-up, this doesn’t necessarily govern or decide the ‘wearability’ of the surface given the correct conditions or amount of force.

I was once asked by a landlord visitor to the mrs-stone-store showroom regarding ‘which stone would be the best stone to put inside a lift, in a block of flats, that wouldn’t damage if a fridge was dropped on or scraped along it?’ The answer I gave was ‘honestly, none!’ I then went on to explain that solid wood, vinyl, laminate, carpet and even concrete flooring wouldn’t fare well to this kind of incident.

Here at mrs-stone-store, we appreciate the rigours and expectations of modern family life, with children, pets and family entertaining etc. We would actually rather sell you nothing, than sell you something that wouldn’t suit your personal circumstances or project criteria. If you still had your heart set on your particular choice and wished to proceed regardless, we would give you the all technical advice with respect to any increased level of maintenance or special requirements.

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**MYTH**

*Sealing my tiles will protect them from wear*

**TRUTH**

Sealing agents are delivered in two different ways i.e. ‘impregnating into’ and ‘sitting on the surface’ of the stone. Impregnating sealers are suspended a ‘carrier’ liquid which is either ‘water’ (LTP Mattstone H20) or ‘spirit’ based (LTP Mattstone, LTP Colour intensifier). This ensures the water repelling agents can soak into the minute pores of the stone.

Once absorbed, the carrier will evaporate leaving the protective sealer behind to repel water and stains. As impregnating sealers soak into the tile, they will generally leave the surface of the tiles as nature intended them to be and will therefore not guard against abrasion from foot traffic.

Surface sealers are generally water based and work by filling and blocking the minute pores of the stone, effectively forming a protective film over the surface of the tile. Surface sealers offer either a satin or gloss ‘wet look’ finish. Though the use these sealers will theoretically mean that ‘life’ will not actually touch the surface of the stone due to the ‘film’ protecting it, this barrier can be dulled in trafficked areas and wear over time. Using the LTP Floorshine to routinely clean will however ‘top-up’ the protective layer with each use leaving your floor not only protected but looking beautiful.
Types of Sealers

There are two main categories of sealers for use in the protection of natural stone surfaces, and the difference between these are simply, one type soaks in, whilst the other will sit on top of the tile.
Impregnators

Impregnating sealers are designed to be ‘absorbed’ down into the stone via fine pores on the surface.

The water and stain repelling agents are suspended in a ‘carrier’ liquid which is either water or ‘spirit’ based. Once the sealer is fully absorbed into the stone, the carrier will evaporate leaving the stain and water repelling agents behind. The action of the sealer ‘soaking in’ results in no change to the ‘texture’ of the surface of the stone.

Impregnating sealers are classed as being ‘micro porous’ which essentially means that whilst water will be repelled at surface level, moisture from below will be allowed to travel up through the stone by capillary action to evaporate on meeting with the warm air – this feature is especially good for old properties that have no damp proof membrane.

This type of sealer generally has a ‘matt’ finish and will leave the stone just as nature intended. There is the option however to ‘naturally enhance’ the colour of the stone by choosing either the ‘natural enhancing’ LTP Colour Intensifier and Stainblock or the ‘super enhancing’ LTP Stone Oil, both designed to highlight the beautiful and varied colours within the stone.

Whilst impregnating sealers will provide a barrier for fluids, it will be subject to ‘acid etching’ from acidic liquids like vinegar, wine, citrus juices and certain household cleaning chemicals, so spills of this nature should be blotted and cleaned as quickly as possible.

Surfaces sealed with impregnating sealers should routinely be cleaned with the LTP Waxwash to ‘top up’ the protective layer, each time it’s used.
Surface sealers

Surface sealers really do just that - sit on the surface of the stone! The sealing product fills the fine pores of the stone, effectively forming a protective ‘film’ over the surface leaving a smooth finish.

Surface sealers offer either a satin or gloss ‘wet look’ finish. Though the use these sealers will theoretically mean that ‘everyday life’ will not actually touch the surface of the stone due to the ‘film’ protecting it, this barrier can be dulled over time in well trafficked areas. Stone sealed with the surface sealers should routinely be cleaned using the LTP Floorshine to ‘top-up’ the protective layer with each use, leaving your floor not only protected but satin sheen or gloss finished again.
Sealers

Impregnators and Surface
LTP Mattstone H20

The LTP Mattstone H20 is an Eco-friendly, natural finish, water based sealer suitable for use both indoors and out on all types of natural stone with honed, rough cut and polished surfaces.

Being water based, LTP Mattstone H20 is virtually odour free and is great for use where contamination of waterways is a consideration i.e. natural stone around fish ponds.

Mattstone H20 will delicately enhance colour whilst protecting against staining. H20 will repel water, oil and grease whilst allowing the surface to breathe. Routinely clean with LTP Waxwash.

Click here to view the full data sheet on this product

LTP Mattstone

LTP Mattstone delicately enhances colour whilst leaving a natural finish. A spirit based sealer suited for use both in and outdoors on all types of natural stone. Strongly repels water, oil and grease whilst allowing the surface to breathe.

Routinely clean with LTP Waxwash.

Click here to view the full data sheet on this product
LTP Colour Intensifier and Stainblock

LTP Colour Intensifier and Stainblock provides a colour enhancing, matt finish on all types of natural stone in both in and outdoor settings.

Great for use in frequently wet areas such as showers and wetrooms.

Strongly repels water, oil, grease and dirt.
Routinely clean with LTP Waxwash.

Click here to view the full data sheet on this product

LTP MPG

LTP MPG is a spirit based sealer suitable for use on polished floors, walls, worktops or fireplaces made from marble, limestone, slate and granite.

MPG sealer does not alter the polished finish of the stone and is suited for use in both in or outdoor settings.

Routinely clean with LTP Waxwash.

Click here to view the full data sheet on this product
LTP Stone Oil

The LTP Stone Oil is an oil based sealer which ‘super enhances’ the colour and texture variation present in the stone.

Due to its super enhancing properties, the LTP Stone Oil is ideal for sealing low porosity stone and hearths where there is the possibility that the machine cut edge will be visible.

Routinely clean with LTP Waxwash.

Click here to view the full data sheet on this product
LTP Ironwax Satin

LTP Ironwax Satin has a semi-sheen finish. Suited to indoor areas only (not wet or shower rooms) this product is an easy to apply, easy to maintain ‘film forming – surface sitting’ acrylic sealer.

Ironwax Satin enhances the colour and texture of the stone whilst protecting against staining, stubborn dirt. Suited for use on travertine, limestone, slate and unpolished marble.

See data sheet for guides when treating rough cut, textured and honed, smooth surfaces.

Avoid shaking the bottle before use as excess frothing will mean an inconsistent finish.

Click here to view the full data sheet on this product

LTP Ironwax Gloss

The LTP Ironwax Gloss is an easy to apply, low maintenance surface sealer with a gloss or ‘wet-look’ finish. Suitable for indoor use only (excluding wet and shower areas).

Ironwax Gloss enhances colour and texture on travertine, limestone, slate and unpolished marble, whilst protecting against staining and stubborn dirt.

See data sheet for guides when treating rough cut, textured and honed, smooth surfaces.

Avoid shaking the bottle before use as excess frothing will mean an inconsistent finish.

Click here to view the full data sheet on this product
Application of Sealers
Sealing is probably the easiest and quickest part of installing a natural stone floor. With a few simple ‘tricks of the trade’, we’ll help you to not only apply the sealer correctly but efficiently, to ensure your natural stone investment is well and truly ‘cared for’.

Tools for the job

- Emulsifying pad/scrubbing brush
- Clean bucket
- Rubber gloves
- Clean micro-fibre cloth
Tiles **MUST** be perfectly **clean**

Surface contamination must be fully removed from the surface of the tile with the appropriate cleaner. Emulsifying pads and grout cleaning brushes are great tools to help remove stubborn contamination from riven, brushed or other textured areas.

Removing cutting and grouting residue can take a little while but using clean fresh water which is changed every couple of meters will stop these particles being redistributed onto the stone – which will lengthen the cleaning process.

One common misconception at this stage is that the sealer will ‘hide’ or ‘cover’ any contaminants left on the surface of the stone – it won’t, it will seal them in resulting in less aesthetically pleasing finish!

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Tiles **MUST** be perfectly **dry**

It is important to make sure that the stone is perfectly dry before you start to apply the sealer. Residual water in the pores of the stone will act as a barrier to the sealer resulting in an inadequately sealed and patchy surface.

*Residual grout residue present.*
Method

1st Application (before grouting)

Before grouting, tiles should be washed with LTP Grimex. Impregnating sealers are best applied with a micro-fibre cloth. This allows for greater control with the application allowing for an even, thorough coat without over applying. ‘Less is more!’ when considering the application of the sealer. In most cases, over-application can cause an unsightly, greasy mess on the surface of the tile which will need to be buffed off before it cures.

NB: Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions for your particular sealer (data sheets available).

Drying times

Drying and curing times will vary depending on the porosity of the stone, ambient air temperature/flow and the amount of product applied.

Our best advice for sealing would be to apply the sealer at such a time whereby a floor can be left without being walked on and walls will not come into contact with fingers or fur for at least 4-6 hours – preferably overnight!

NB: Do not be tempted to cover the sealed surface – plastic, bubble-wrap and other such protective coverings will hinder the sealers ability to dry effectively and can leave unsightly marks on the surface of the tiles once dry.

2nd Application (after grouting)

As in tip 1, tiles will need to be beautifully clean and dry before applying the second coat of sealer.

The second coat is generally applied at right angles to the first application to fully ensure an even coverage.
Routine Cleans
Routine Cleans

It is a simple fact that cleaning with the right products (neutral ph cleaner) will undoubtedly prolong the effectiveness of the sealer and therefore protection for your natural stone surface. Why is this? – Because special ingredients are added to these cleaners to effectively ‘top up’ your sealer as you routinely clean.

Here at mrs-stone-store, we stock two specific neutral ph, routine cleaners specifically for use on natural stone surfaces. The choice of which routine cleaner to use depends on whether you have sealed with an ‘impregnating’ or a ‘surface sitting’ sealer.

Waxwash

Waxwash is a gentle routine maintenance cleaner, with traces of linseed oil designed for use on surfaces sealed with an impregnating sealers i.e LTP Mattstone, Colour Intensifier & Stainblock, Mattstone H20 or the MPG.

Floorshine

Floorshine is a clean and shine renovating sealer specifically for use on areas treated with surface sealers like LTP Ironwax Satin or LTP Ironwax Gloss.
General care and routine cleans

Keeping your natural stone in tip-top condition is really easy and a few simple steps ensures the longevity of your investment.

Floors

- Sweep with soft brush to remove debris. Avoid worn hoover attachments that could scratch.
- Rugs - placed near entrance/exit areas are ideal to avoid the transference of abrasive particles such as grit etc.
- Spills – ‘blot’ spillages with paper towel; being mindful not to spread the spill further by wiping. Rinse with water and clean area with the relevant routine maintenance sealer.

Walls

- Squeegee tiles in wet areas after use to minimise the build-up of soaps etc.

Do’s and Do not’s

- **Do not** - use general household cleaners on natural stone.
- **Do not** - use scourers.
- **Do not** - use products that contain citrus (acidic) or vinegar.
- **Do** - use LTP Waxwash or Floorshine (depending on sealer used).
- **Do** – use coasters and trivets.
- **Do** – blot spills as quickly as possible.
- **Do** – use recommended routine maintenance cleaners.