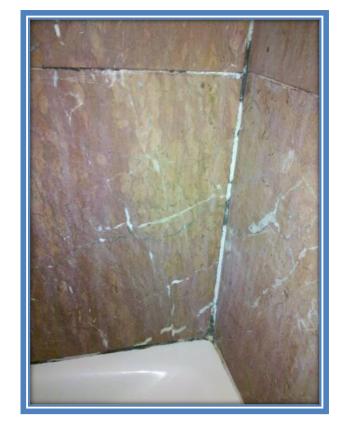
Chapter Twelve - How to Clean Marble Grout

Whether you enjoy marble in your kitchen, bath, or elsewhere in your home as your marble ages, so does your grout. Because grout is porous, more so than marble it becomes dark and stained as it absorbs dirt and grease.

When you think about it, your best efforts in cleaning your marble surface has the byproduct of pushing dirty water into lower lying grout joints.

This accumulation happens so gradually that it often goes unnoticed until one day you realize your grout looks terrible.

This collection of dirt and grime in your grout joints is a perfect breeding ground for mildew,



germs, bacteria, mold and even odors. Over time it becomes trapped well below the grout surface and becomes difficult to remove.

But before offering options for cleaning the grout, it helps to understand the different grout types and how these different types will respond to cleaning.

The 3 Types of Grout Used for Setting Tile

There are three basic types of grout used and each is specific to certain material types and installations:

- Sanded
- Non-sanded
- Epoxy

Sanded grout is a porous material and even under the best conditions will become soiled and stained.



Sanded grout is used where grout lines are 1/8" or wider. Sanded grout has fine sand added to it which keeps it from shrinking too much, unlike the non-sanded variety.

While sanded grout may be the best for grout lines of 1/8" or larger, it may not be the best for natural stone installations like marble.

Because sanded grout contains sand, it may scratch the edges of polished stone like marble and granite.

Non-sanded grout is used when grout lines are less than 1/8" wide. Non-sanded grout will shrink as it cures which is the reason for using it in smaller grout lines.

To use un-sanded grout in lines over an 1/8" thick requires more grout promoting more shrinkage -- this often causes this grout type to shrink to the point of pulling away from the tile.

Non-sanded grout is used most on vertical surfaces, like shower walls, because it is "stickier" than the sanded version aiding in tile adhesion to a wall.

Epoxy grout is the premium selection in marble grout. It contains little or no sand, will withstand prolonged use and is waterproof as well as stain resistant.

Epoxy grout is made with resins and a hardener that's mixed just prior to installation. Because it's waterless it is extremely stain and mildew resistant and does not need to be sealed.



It is, however, more difficult to work with, can be hazardous when coming into contact with unprotected skin and is harder to clean up following installation.

So if My Marble is Sealed Why Not My Grout?

This is a common question when faced with the task of grout cleaning. Rarely is grout sealed at the time marble tile is set. The mortar bed has a cure time, as does the grout.

Since tile will often be sealed before installation and grout installed after tile installation, the contractor rarely returns to seal the grout once it's cured.

First Steps to Cleaning Marble Grout

The easiest first step to cleaning grout is by making a paste from two common household products -- vinegar and baking soda.

- 1) Using a 3 to 1 ratio, baking soda to vinegar, make a simple paste.
- 2) Wet the grout with water in a spray bottle to promote better distribution of the paste when applied.

- 3) Spread the paste in the dirty grout lines using a foam, synthetic or natural bristle paint brush. Scrub while applying to get deep into the grout.
- 4) Depending on the condition of your grout, let the paste sit for about 30 minutes to 1 hour.
- 5) Rinse thoroughly with warm water until clear and then dry the marble with a lint-free cloth.



6) If the grout is cleaned to your satisfaction, then seal the grout, once it's completely dried from your cleaning, to preserve its appearance.

As an alternative to vinegar and baking soda, you can also make a PASTE from OxiClean and water (not per the directions on the OxiClean packaging).



Another very successful alternative is to mix equal parts of vinegar and Blue Dawn dishwashing liquid. Apply this with a spray bottle, let sit for up to 1 hour and then follow steps 4, 5 and 6 above.

A Caveat to Marble Grout Cleaning

One aspect of grout cleaning that may make your job much harder is if you've sealed your marble at home, prior to cleaning your grout.

An impregnating sealer will seal in any dirt and grime flourishing in untreated grout -- once the sealer is in, it will be hard to get the grime removed and leave you with less than satisfactory results.

For the Marble Grout That's Too Far Gone

Another option before chiseling out and replacing old grout is to color seal it. If your marble grout is very heavily stained, then changing the grout color through a color sealer will provide a uniform appearance.

Color sealers come in a standard range of colors or can be custom mixed to any color you can imagine and works with both sanded and non-sanded grouts.