

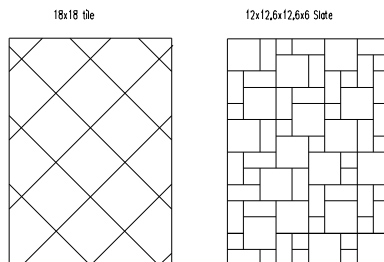
# You're Going to Tile Over What?!

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Europamerican Tile & Marble*

You should know that you can tile directly to Corian, Slate, Marble, Formica, Sheet Vinyl and/or old tile! Over the past years we have tiled over all of these surfaces carefully, correctly and quite successfully. We provide a written 2 year guarantee on our work and with only one exception (discussed below) each project was successful and still in existence today! Any hard clean surface that is properly affixed to the subsurface is a candidate to be tiled upon.

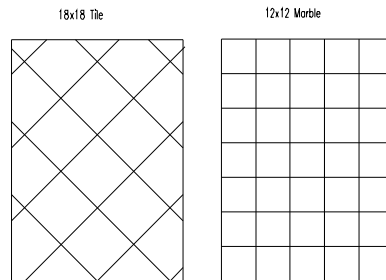
We do not often tile over **Corian** which would then make for quite an expensive countertop! In the past, however, due to lack of satisfaction with a light colored Corian countertop we applied a multicolored tile right over the Corian resulting in a trouble free, interesting countertop that highlighted the kitchen décor.

Here in the Dayton area someone sold a great deal of **multicolored slate** tiles in foyers of new homes that were being built in the 50's to the 70's! After the slate became dirty and dull many housewives heard that you could shine up the slate with floor wax. Indeed the floor wax shined up the slate but it also created a semi bumpy 'vinyl floor' that required constant stripping and repolishing to keep it



shiny. This was more work on an ongoing basis for many housewives so we have often been called in to tile over the old slate to create a new easy to care for tile floor! We often install a large body tile floor set on the diagonal to make the foyer bigger and easier to clean (less grout and grout joints!).

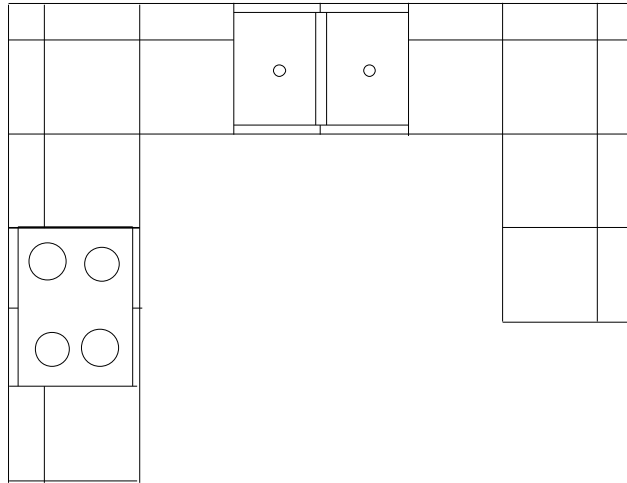
**Marble** is a fairly soft stone and the way that it is sold here it is most often sold in a highly polished state. The problem is that the shine comes from water pressure and diamond “sandpaper” that polishes the stone much like you might polish wood. There is nothing on the marble to prevent it from returning to it's natural unpolished rock state except daily or at least every other day care! If not



lightly mopped to get any grit that might have come onto the marble from shoes, the marble will be slightly scratched when the grit is walked upon on the marble. The result is that light will not deflect properly and the marble will become “unpolished” or dull! The only way to make it shiny again is with water, or chemicals and polishing. This most often should be done by a professional and is fairly expensive. In our experience, it is often almost cheaper, and a better long - term solution, to use polished porcelain installed directly over the old marble. The polished porcelain that we use is usually 18x18 or larger so that there will be less grout on the floor to maintain and the porcelain being much harder than the marble gives a better long term solution to having a shiny elegant floor!

Who can forget the orange and green **Formica** countertops of the 40's,50's60's and 70's! With large format tiles (18x18 or larger) we can create a new countertop directly over the old Formica at about 5-10% of the cost of replacing the countertop with new Formica! There is no construction muss or fuss. The only thing that has to happen is that a plumber has to raise the kitchen sink and an electrician may have to raise the cook top! Large body tiles are place next to the stove and sink so that the tile work surface is maximized in the work

## 18x18 Tile



area and grout issues are minimized! The tile can't be burned or scratched. You can even cut on it except that it will make your knives dull! We often recommend that the old Formica short backsplash be eliminated so that you add another inch or so to your countertop. After the countertop is installed then you can add a new backsplash, the "earrings of the house!"

We are quite often able to tile directly over **sheet vinyl** as long as it is properly affixed to the substrate and as long as it is not perimeter glue down vinyl (the source of our only failure from tiling over vinyl, a \$3000 lesson!). When perimeter glue down vinyl warms up it floats above most of the floor and the resulting movement will cause a failure in the installation. Similarly vinyl squares are a potential failure as often the glue holding them down has become weakened over time, making the vinyl tile unsuitable as a substrate. If there is a wood floor under the vinyl, then it needs to be of sufficient strength to support the weight of the new tile and not allow deflection (up and down movement) in the floor which will result in failure. Often we find that older homes have a fairly strong floor system and we are then allowed to attach our tile directly to the vinyl using the appropriate glue. If the sheet vinyl is over cement it has the benefit of adding another level of installation from the ground and also will act as a crack isolation barrier to protect the new tile from a cracking cement floor.

Not too long ago a typical **tile** installation utilized a 6x6 quarry tile (baked clay) or a 8x8 ceramic tile on kitchen, bath and foyer floors. In those days it was often said that small areas required small tiles. We have found that just the opposite is the case! The bigger tiles will not only make a room look larger but because it has less grout joints it is much easier to maintain.



We have had great success in tiling directly over such old smaller tiles with large body tiles to great improvement!

Often older homes have bathrooms filled with 4x4 tiles colored white in the best of circumstances and often pink, green, blue and even purple in the worst! Again, if the tile is still properly affixed to the wall we can then tile directly over the old 4x4 tile and make the room look modern and clean without any construction activity at all!



If the tile has been put on “green board” or plaster and has not shown signs of failure, utilization of a large body tile on the wall will greatly minimize the migration of water through grout to the wall. The use of a large body tile in this instance will delay, perhaps forever, the potential need to replace the wall and tile due to water damage and or mold.

Often clients spend more money or do more work than they have to because they aren't aware that you can indeed, tile over Corian, Slate, Marble, Formica, Sheet Vinyl and old tile!

**Carlo Americo Odella** owns **Europamerican Tile** at 96 East Franklin Street, Centerville 45459 937 439 1485, Fax 439 6671, email: [europamtile@aol.com](mailto:europamtile@aol.com) and his website is at [www.europamericantile.com](http://www.europamericantile.com). The website has directions to Europamerican's showroom (M 10-7, Tu-Th 10-6, Fri- Sa 10-4) and additional articles on tile and grout.