



Versatile, water-resistant and cost-effective, ceramic tiles are ideal in bathrooms.

Tiles

PROS: Tiles resist scratches, tolerate wear and tear and are cool underfoot. Choose ceramic or porcelain options for the ultimate in durability. Suitable in nearly any room or outdoor area, tiles are available in countless patterns, motifs and colours.

CONS: Tiles require regular cleaning to prevent dirt build-up. Matt finishes mark the most, so opt for glazed or polished if low maintenance is a priority. Ceramic tiles are particularly cool to touch, which may be a drawback for those in colder climates.

ECO ELEMENT: Some tiles have stronger eco credentials than others. "There are a large number of porcelain tiles manufactured in Italy that use up to 40 per cent recycled materials and follow European green standards," says Kate Lane of Amber Tiles.

EXPECT TO PAY:

The price of tiles varies, depending on what type you choose. Glazed ceramic and porcelain tiles, from \$20/sqm; polished porcelain tiles, from \$30/sqm; matt ceramic tiles, from \$35/sqm; matt porcelain tiles, from \$45 (excluding installation).

Natural stone

PROS: Stone's good looks and strength make it a suitable choice for entertaining areas. "Stone floors age beautifully; they take on a patina that is an unwritten historical record of the feet that have passed by," says Sandy Yeates of Bellstone. It's suitable for wet areas, and can be continued outdoors for a seamless effect.

CONS: Polished stone is slippery when wet and can show scratches, so opt for a honed finish in high-traffic areas or if you have pets. Poor quality stone is susceptible to staining, so make sure you're buying from a reputable supplier as it's difficult for the untrained eye to spot the difference. "Stones with high density and low water absorption rates are the most durable," explains Sandy.

ECO ELEMENT: Stone is a natural material that will last a lifetime, and can be salvaged and recycled to use in landscaping. It's worth checking that your prospective purchase comes from a well-managed quarry.

EXPECT TO PAY: Slate, from \$19/sqm; granite, limestone, bluestone, from \$50/sqm; travertine, from \$90/sqm (excluding installation).

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Concrete

PROS: Concrete is durable, easy to clean and offers a striking contemporary look. No longer limited to steely grey, concrete floors can be personalised by adding stone aggregate, coloured pigments, mother of pearl or coloured glass into the cement mix. It's also energy efficient. "Warmed passively by the winter sun, a polished concrete floor releases heat back into the room at night," says Renae Barrass of Austin Design.

CONS: Concrete can't be laid on top of an existing floor, so the floor has to be removed first. Installation takes time, as the surface needs sanding 14 days after it is poured, with a sealer applied after that.

ECO ELEMENT: "Concrete is recyclable and can be made using by-products from manufacturing and power plants, which reduces landfill," says Dallas Mexon of Concrete by Design.

EXPECT TO PAY: From \$150/sqm (excluding installation). >



'Boralstone' polished concrete flooring, from \$145/sqm, Boral, boral.com.au



Earthy in tone, travertine flooring lends a chic