



## **IICRC Consumer Floor and Furnishings Care Information**

- 1. Stained Grout**
- 2. Topical Sealer/coating failure or ware**
- 3. MDF baseboard swelling**
- 4. Sealers or protectors, not beading**
- 5. Acid etching on stone**
- 6. Travertine/Marble/Limestone dulling**
- 7. Cracked/damaged grout**
- 8. Tile lippage**
- 9. Microfiber flat mop system for all hard surface flooring types**

## 1. Stained grout

Standard cement-based grout is similar to a concrete driveway, garage floor, or sidewalks. Grout and concrete can all be easily stained if not sealed and properly maintained.

Soil in your grout that has not saturated too deeply can usually be removed or visually improved with a thorough cleaning.

More deeply-set stains will require regrouting or applying a topical color seal product to hide the stained areas.

Using a no-rinse neutral pH solution as your regular cleaner is highly recommended as acidic or alkaline cleaners can degrade the grout and leave soil-attracting residues over time.

**Care Tip-** Using a microfiber flat mop system will help keep your entire floor cleaner longer, especially the grout. Be sure to use a no-rinse neutral pH cleaner, which leaves no residue and will not affect sealers of any kind.





## 2. Topical sealer/coating failure or wear

Floor sealers fall into two categories, penetrating and topical. Penetrative, also known as "impregnating", penetrate deep into the surface of the grout or stone where it chemically reacts below the surface from within the pores. Penetrating sealers do not leave behind a visible surface film, and most of them will not change the look or color of the surface. Topical sealers are like a clear coat of paint. Topical sealers can scratch, separate from the floor/flake, or wear off over time. Topical sealers typically are not the best choice and are often applied by mistake.

In many cases, it is hard or impossible to detect the presence of a topical sealer until the cleaning process reveals that this type of sealer has been applied.

In some cases, topically-coated floors can be gently cleaned, and a new layer of sealer can be re-applied. Applying a new layer of sealer may hide many minor flaws in wood or porous tile floors.

Removing topical sealers can be an expensive, messy, and time-consuming project. Not all IICRC Certified cleaning companies are trained to or wish to perform this service.

### Care Tips:

1. Using a no-rinse neutral pH solution as your regular cleaner is highly recommended as acidic or alkaline cleaners degrade grout sealer over time and can leave soil that attracts residue.
2. Use a microfiber flat mop system for all hard surface flooring types:
3. Sweep or dust the floor with a broom or a microfiber dust mop before wet cleaning.
4. Use one 18" blue microfiber flat mop head to clean every 100 square feet of hard surface flooring.
5. Fill a bucket or sink with a gallon of warm water and add one ounce of a no-rinse neutral pH cleaner, readily available on Amazon, your local janitorial supply, or hardware store. Use soft water to mix with, if available.
6. Submerge as many mop heads as you'll need for your cleaning project in the cleaning solution. Take out one mop head and wring out enough cleaning solution so that it does not drip.
7. Clean your way into a room or area roughly 10 feet by 10 feet (or less for heavily soiled areas) using a figure 8 motion. Clean the entire area, work your way to the furthest point, then work your way back out, continuing to use the figure 8 pattern and being sure to remove your footprints as you go.
8. Remove the used mop head, set it aside for laundering, and start a new area with a fresh mop head.
9. Keep a spray bottle filled with the same neutral cleaner and your mop with a head attached handy for spot or intermittent cleanings.





### 3. MDF baseboard swelling

*Medium Density Fiberboard* baseboard (pressboard essentially) has become the number one choice for most homes in the last decade. While this material is more affordable than hardwood, its inherent ability to absorb water makes it a poor choice.

If the bottom edge is not painted or sealed, and there is a gap between the trim and floor, water and cleaning solutions can come in contact with the fiberboard, and it will swell considerably. The swelling causes damage to the board, and paint may bubble, peel or chip and is not fixable. Ideally, any gaps should be filled with silicone or caulk before having your floors professionally cleaned. In cases where time or finances do not allow for precautionary measures, your cleaning technician should do their best to keep moisture away from the areas where a gap is present.

**Care Tip-** Using a microfiber flat mop system will help keep your entire floor cleaner longer, especially the grout. A flat mop is much easier to control along baseboards as well. Be sure to use a no-rinse neutral pH cleaner, which leaves no residue and will not affect sealers of any kind.





#### **4. Sealers or protectors, not beading**

When a penetrative sealer product is applied to grout, there may be an expectation that liquids will bead up and sit on the surface.

The water beading attributed to a sealer is based on the surface tension created by the sealer residue. The first time that grout is cleaned, the surface tension is relaxed, and the water may no longer hold a strong bead on the surface. Remember, stain resistance is the desired result, not temporary water beading. A decrease in surface tension does not mean a reduction in stain resistance.

Sealing grout and stone after a professional cleaning is always recommended to restore stain and soil absorption resistance.

**Care Tips:** The use of a no-rinse neutral pH solution as your regular cleaner is highly recommended as acidic or alkaline cleaners degrade grout sealer over time and can leave soil that attracts residue.

Use a microfiber flat mop system for all hard surface flooring types:

1. Sweep or dust the floor with a broom or a microfiber dust mop before wet cleaning.
2. Use one 18" blue microfiber flat mop head to clean every 100 square feet of hard surface flooring.
3. Fill a bucket or sink with a gallon of warm water and add one ounce of a no-rinse neutral pH cleaner, readily available on Amazon, your local janitorial supply, or hardware store. Use soft water to mix with if available.
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6. Remove the used mop head, set it aside for laundering, and start a new area with a fresh mop head.

Keep a spray bottle filled with the same neutral cleaner and your mop with a head attached handy for spot or intermittent cleanings.





## 5. Acid etching on stone

Etching is surface damage in the form of a dull mark on natural stone that contains calcium carbonate. It happens when acidic substances come into contact with countertops, floors, walls, or anywhere you may have an acid-sensitive calcareous stone (natural stone composed of calcium carbonate). Some common household items are notorious for causing etching, including lemons, soft drinks, ketchup, and many over-the-counter household cleaning products. These substances can corrode man-made, marble, limestone, or travertine tiles and eat away the shiny surface layer, leaving behind a dull spot that is often lighter in color, white, or mistaken for a stain.

Resurfacing services of etched areas are offered by many IICRC certified companies and individuals.

**Care Tips:** The use of a no-rinse neutral pH solution as your regular cleaner is highly recommended as acidic or alkaline cleaners degrade grout sealer over time and can leave a residue that attracts soil

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7. Remove the used mop head, set it aside for laundering, and start a new area with a fresh mop head.
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## 6. Travertine/Marble/Limestone dulling

Calcium-based stone is easily dulled from foot traffic, aggressive cleaning from vacuum cleaners, stiff brushes, acidic liquids, sand, dust, pets, etc. Keeping the polished look and maintaining the shine requires frequent maintenance. Many home and business owners find that a honed (dull) surface is much easier and more cost-effective to maintain.

Your IICRC certified technician may offer resurfacing services for floors, countertops, and shower stalls.

### Care Tips:

Using a no-rinse neutral pH solution as your day-to-day cleaner is highly recommended as acidic or alkaline cleaners degrade grout sealer over time and can leave soil attracting residues.

1. Follow these directions to use a microfiber flat mop system on all hard surface flooring types, including wood, vinyl, tile, and stone
2. Sweep or dust the floor with a broom or a microfiber dust mop before wet cleaning.
3. Use one 18" blue microfiber flat mop head to clean every 100 square feet of hard surface flooring.
4. Fill a bucket or sink with a gallon of warm water and add one ounce of a no-rinse neutral pH cleaner, readily available on Amazon, your local janitorial supply, or hardware store. Use soft water to mix with if available.
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## **7. Cracked/damaged grout**

The movement between two surfaces usually causes grout failure in the form of cracks. Houses and buildings are constantly moving in tiny increments due to foundation settling, humidity, temperature, and other factors. For example, if the grout in a bathtub enclosure is an inflexible material, as most grout is, cracks can develop when a bathtub moves one way while a tile wall moves another way. Grout improperly mixed with too much or not enough water can lead to air pockets or powdery, weak grout that will need to be replaced.

There are many ways to repair damaged grout. Ask your IICRC certified technician if they provide this service or have a referral for an experienced tile setting/repairman.



## **8. Lippage**

Lippage is the term used to describe when one tile is higher or lower than the one next to it. This can occur due to faulty installation or irregularly shaped tiles. Many plank-type tiles have a slight bow to them so that the lippage can appear along the center edge rather than at a corner. With ceramic or porcelain tiles, there is no practical fix to the problem. Irregular soil patterns and wear will occur over time when lippage is present.

Polishing of stone can be difficult to perform when lippage is present. The areas next to the higher tile cannot be reached by the polishing disc and therefore does not get polished, creating what is known as "Picture Framing" in the trades.

With natural stone tiles, your IICRC certified company may offer resurfacing or grinding down the high edge to make it even or can refer to a company that does. Irregular soil patterns and wear will occur over time when lippage is present.

## **9. Microfiber flat mop system for all hard surface flooring types**

1. Sweep or dust the floor with a broom or a microfiber dust mop before wet cleaning.
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## 10. Modern Porcelain Tiles

It has come to the IICRC's attention that there is an industry-wide problem with modern porcelain tiles manufactured from 2018 to the present. Experts in the floor cleaning industry have identified that most porcelain tiles, especially the variety that mimic the appearance of stone or wood, are HIGHLY likely to be damaged by alkaline cleaning agents.

During the manufacturing process, a glaze is applied over the print of the stone or wood surface and baked on for durability. Recent changes to this process mean these once very durable tiles are now EASILY damaged by common cleaning solutions and practices. Unlike quality porcelain, some new tiles can easily be scratched by metal or other sharp objects.

Once the protective glaze has been compromised, the floor can appear splotchy or streaked after any cleaning, and the more the floor is cleaned, the more susceptible to splotchiness it becomes. In some cases, the splotchiness can be removed with pH balancing and mechanical buffing, but unfortunately, in many cases, the splotchiness is unfixable without causing further damage to the glaze.

It has been found that the damage can also occur when the home or business owner cleans their floors, as many consumer-grade cleaners are alkaline. It's been proven that virucides are also potentially damaging.

The IICRC strongly recommends that only neutral-pH "no rinse" floor cleaning products be used on your porcelain tile floors. We also recommend that a new reusable microfiber mop head be used every 100 to 200 square feet, so soil isn't spread from area to area.

The professional floor cleaning industry leaders and experts have been monitoring this phenomenon for some time and found that the only thing consistent is its inconsistency. Our company needs to play it safe and use neutral to acidic cleaning agents. We will do our best to inspect the floor before cleaning for any potential damage that may have occurred when you, your housekeepers, or staff have cleaned. However, the damage can be hidden under mop water residues and will only show up after we thoroughly rinse your floors.

If your grout soiling requires the use of an alkaline cleaning agent to get satisfactory results, you'll need to sign a waiver that releases us from potential liability if your tile is damaged.