

How to tile a wall

.. step by step

1 MEASURING UP

Measure the height of your wall and calculate how many tiles of the size you've chosen will fit from floor to ceiling. Count a half or part of a tile as whole one. Do the same for the width of the wall or area you're tiling.

Multiply the number needed for the height by the number for the width. This gives you the total number of tiles to buy. Repeat the process for any other walls.

Multiply the total number of tiles by 1.05 to give you 5% more tiles than you technically need. This extra 5% allows for any breakages when you lay them.

When measuring up remember to deduct for doors and windows!

2 MAKING A TILE GAUGE OR TILE

A tile gauge or rod is used to mark out vertical guidelines for laying your tiles.

Make a fairly long gauge rod from an old off-cut of 2in x 1in wood or similar (**fig. 1**).

Lay out several tiles on the floor. Space them as they will be when fixed vertically (including your spacers between each tile).

Place the rod next to these and carefully mark the line of each join. You now have a rod for marking out your tile positions.

3 MARKING OUT PLAIN WALLS

Measure the height of the wall or area you're tiling and divide by two. Mark this height on the wall. With the gauge, lightly mark tile joins from this line down to the bottom (**fig. 2**).

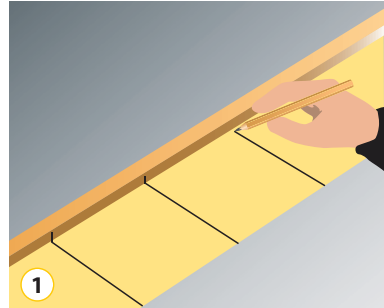
If this means the last tile will be less than half a tile, move the original starting point up or down by half a tile and repeat the process.

Then use a spirit level to draw a horizontal line across the wall for the bottom of the lowest row of whole tiles.

Secure a batten to the wall along this horizontal line. This will be your base to start tiling from (**fig. 3**).

You're now ready to repeat this process to mark the vertical guides.

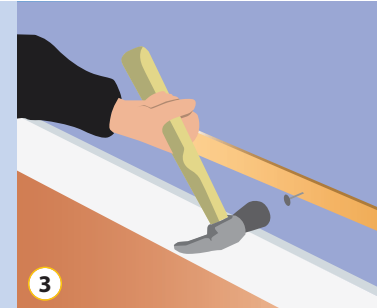
To ensure those vertical lines of tiles stay vertical, use the gauge rod to measure and mark guide lines at 1m intervals around the room. Now you can check your tiles are vertical as you go along.



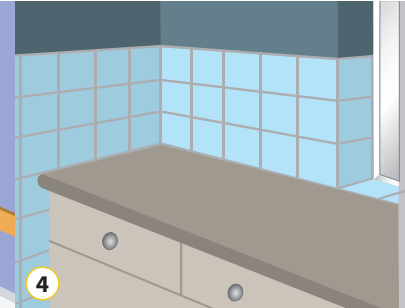
1 Making a tile gauge rod.



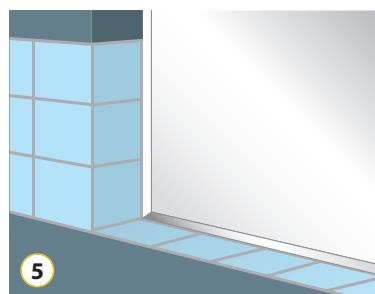
2 Marking out plain walls.



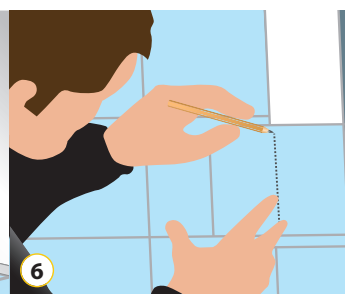
3 Secure the bottom batten.



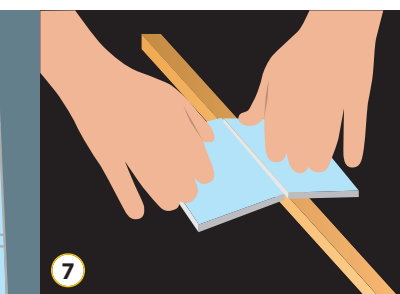
4 For a part-tiled wall above a work surface, plan for a complete tile at the bottom if practical.



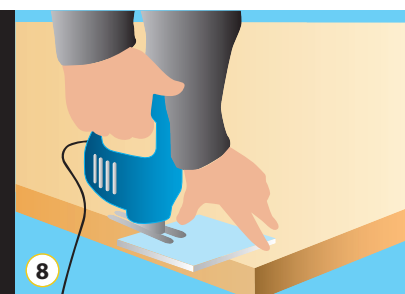
5 Tiling around a window sill.



6 Quick method of marking edge tiles for cutting.



7 Hold the scored tile over a thin batten and apply pressure to the tile.



8 You will be able to get ceramic cutting blades for your jig saw.

4 PLANNING FOR PART-TILED WALLS

If you only want to tile part of the wall, you'll need to plan in the position and size of the 'edge' tiles.

For example, if you're only tiling the bottom half of a wall, it's best to have a whole tile at the top. The same goes for tiling above a work surface (**fig. 4**).

5 PLANNING FOR WINDOWS AND DOORS

Again, think about the effect of different starting points on the layout of tiles around your window or door.

It's usually better to have evenly sized tiles either side of the window. But you'll need to weigh up the merits of this against the need for evenly sized tiles at either end of the wall as well (**fig. 5**).

6 PLAN YOUR TILE LAYOUT FIRST

When you're doing a whole room, plan the layout for the entire space before fixing any tiles in place.

Mark up one wall at a time. But the base line should be identical on every wall in the room - i.e. the horizontal lines must match up on all walls.

When establishing this base line, consider the levels of window sills, door heads, bath tops and worktop levels.

7 MEASURING AND MARKING THE TILES

Where walls are reasonably square, a quick way of measuring tiles for cutting is to hold the tile back to front, one edge against the wall, and mark it a grout line width from the adjacent whole tile (**fig. 6**).

When cutting tiles, allow for the grout line between each tile.

8 CUTTING TILES

Score the surface along the cut line with a tile cutter. Hold a straight edge on the cut line and run the cutter along this. Then, holding the tile over a small wooden batten, snap the tile along the line (**fig. 7**). Please note this method cannot be used for porcelain or stone tiles.

Where the off-cut is narrow, the snapping process will be difficult so use a pair of tile nippers to gradually nibble away the off-cut, working slowly towards the scored line.

When cutting a curved or L-shaped tile, score the surface along the trim line, then gradually remove the excess in small pieces with tile nippers.

You can purchase blades for cutting ceramics for your electric jigsaw or purchase an electric wet tile cutter. Using a jigsaw makes cutting awkward shapes simple (**fig. 8**).

Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Wear safety glasses and gloves when cutting your wall tiles.

Tools for the job..

Available from Target Tiles



Bucket & Sponge



Adhesive



Spirit Level



Tile Spacers



Adhesive Trowel



Grout



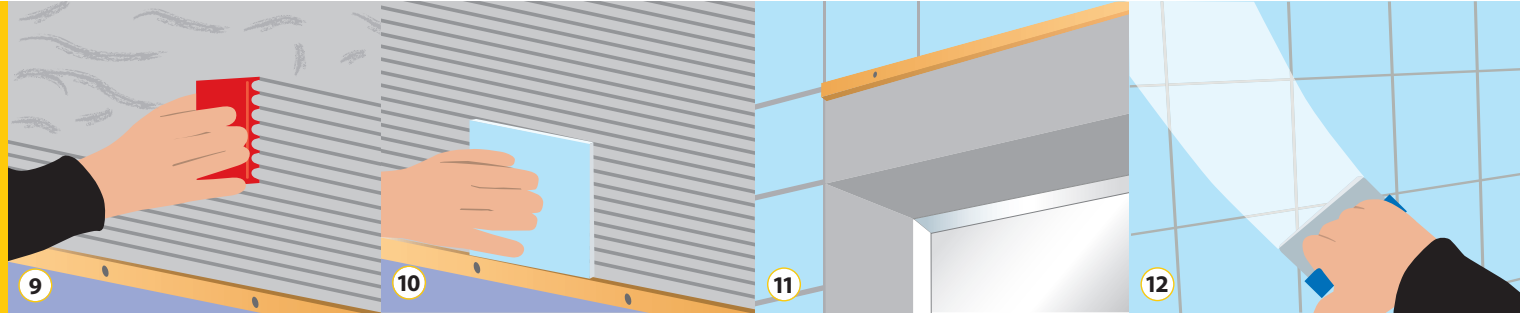
Grout Float



Tile Cutter

Safety first..

Always wear goggles and a dust mask when cutting tiles as tile fragments may cause injury and we recommend you wear gloves when grouting tiles.



9 Spread adhesive over a manageable area of about 1m² at a time.

10 Fix the first tile for cutting against the bottom batten.

11 When tiling above a window or basin, fix a temporary batten to support the first whole row above the item.

12 Apply the grout with a squeegee to small areas at a time.

9 USING ADHESIVES

The type of adhesive you use will depend on where the tiles are being laid.

Use waterproof adhesives around showers and baths and a flexible adhesive for surfaces that may move a little, such as plywood panelling around a bath.

Spread adhesive over a manageable area - about 1m² at a time. Use a small ridged trowel to create raised ridges (fig. 9).

10 FIXING THE FIRST TILES

Fix the first tile against the horizontal batten at the bottom. Line up its side with the vertical mark set earlier as your starting point (fig. 10). It may be easier to also fix a vertical batten for the first column of tiles.

Press the tile against the adhesive. Make sure it's flat and firmly fixed.

Take the second tile and fix it next to the first. Allow a gap for grouting. If the tiles don't have lugs, use plastic spacers to maintain the gap.

Finish the first row and then fix a second row above the first. Take care to space them evenly and level with the next.

Make sure each tile is both flat relative to the wall and also to the previous tile. The ridges in your adhesive will let you move the tiles around to get the same level.

Helpful hint..

Thoroughly clean the wall surface you're tiling. If necessary, use a detergent and let the wall dry completely before starting.

11 CONTINUE TILING AROUND THE ROOM

You now have a solid foundation to continue tiling around the room.

Make sure the vertical lines between the tiles are staying vertical.

Leave the batten at the bottom in place until the adhesive has fully set - otherwise the tiles may slide out of line.

12 TILING AROUND WINDOWS AND BASINS

When tiling above a window, fix a temporary batten to support the first whole row above it rather than fixing the cut tiles first. Do the same with basins. It's a lot easier to cut these tiles into place when the surrounding whole tiles have been fixed and are set (fig. 11).

Above a window, any cut tiles will have nothing underneath them to stop them slipping. Use masking tape to attach them to a previously fixed tile. This will hold them in place until the adhesive dries.

13 GROUTING TILES

Let the adhesive set before filling the gaps between tiles with grout.

There are different types of grout. Check the one you'll need for your specific job.

Spread the grout with a squeegee. Work small areas at a time so the grout doesn't dry before it's in place (fig. 12).

Work the grout in every direction, pushing it into all of the joints.

To smooth the grout in the joints, have a damp sponge to hand as you go. Wipe any wet grout off the surface of the tiles, but take care not to remove the grout from the tile joints where you've applied it.

When you've finished, there'll be a thin film of grout on the surface of the tiles. Remove this by buffing them up with a soft cloth.