

## Antonella Romano, The Tile Oracle

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NORTH JERSEY HOMES

Antonella Romano is owner of the Stone and Tile Emporium in Wycoff ([www.stoneandtilenj.com](http://www.stoneandtilenj.com)). Send your stone and tile questions to her at [emolo@northjersey.com](mailto:emolo@northjersey.com).

**QUESTION:** My husband and I are building a home and I have been shopping for tile. A salesperson in a local tile store is helping me put the tile selections together. She wants me to use porcelain for the kitchen floor and the outside patio, marble for the entrance floor and the bathrooms and tumbled marble for the backsplash. My husband is acting as general contractor on weekends and doing the installation. I have ordered samples and have to go over everything with him. Since we're doing this on our own, I'm worried something is going to go wrong. Can you give us some direction?

— Vanessa, Englewood

**ANSWER:** Your selections sound good for the areas you have mentioned, but problems don't just arise from materials. They often come out of bad installation. Sit down with your tile designer and discuss the installation of your selections. Your designer should lay out each space on paper before your husband does anything.

This schematic should show everything the tile has to be installed in and around. In your entrance foyer, it should show tile size, direction, borders and/or medallions (if any); in the bathrooms, where the tile has to be installed around outlets, diverters, showerheads and what ever else will affect the borders or accent details. The kitchen backsplash may require removing plug outlets or pot fillers.

A good tile designer will come to your home, delineate all these things and prepare your husband with the details he needs to do a problem-free installation.

For instance, what will the foyer tile be installed onto? Is it a wood sub-floor that may need building up with cement and/or wonder board? What corners will need mitering in the bathrooms? What is the exact amount of material needed in terms of both square and linear footage? Only a walk-through of your home can answer these vital questions.

I also highly recommend getting some estimates from installers, because tile is only as good as its installation.

Everyone puts thought into the stone or tile they want, but an inexperienced or unqualified installer can make the most beautiful and strongest stone or tile look like damaged goods from the get-go. Also, you can get tiles that come up after less than a year, joints that don't line up, uneven floors and messy grout seams. Select an installer with 10 years under their belt, or you may have to rip everything up and start over.

If you still want your husband to install the materials, at least have your tile designer visit your home and lay out everything for him, while also confirming your quantities.

Your question highlights a common issue in the industry today. When you shop for stone or tile, you expect the salesperson to help you with the design. But the designs have to be installed around plumbing, outlets, vanities, plugs, switches, cabinets and virtually every aspect of a room. If the salesperson is not also familiar with installation, and sells you the tile without a plan, the result can be border designs interrupted by valves and other hardware, leaks into walls and plugs on top of chair rails.

When shopping for stone and tile, make sure you work with a salesperson who can provide specifications to give to the installer. That way, you'll have a dreamy design rather than a money pit of problems.



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