

How to remove grey grout stain on ceramic wall tiles?

Q. Grey grout stain has penetrated the surface of some of the ceramic wall tiles in our bathroom. It's been a few weeks now, and I've tried scrubbing with water and a mild cleaner, but the stain is still there. Is it possible to remove the stain? If so, how?

A. Let's start with a bit of background on grout color sealers, specially formulated coatings designed to recolor and seal grout lines. When used correctly, they offer great benefits, such as stain resistance, easier maintenance, and a refreshed appearance. However, product selection and application are critical. DIY-grade sealers and improper application methods can lead to unfortunate side effects, like residue or staining on adjacent surfaces, especially tile. Many homeowners aren't aware that some sealers bond aggressively and can be very difficult to remove once cured.

Although ceramic tile is typically non-porous and resistant to staining, certain factors, like leaving grout color sealer on too long or working with textured or matte-finish ceramic, can allow sealer residue to cling to the surface. When that happens, typical household cleaners often fall short, especially if the sealer has had time to cure.

Here are a few things you can try:

- **Professional-grade grout haze remover:** These are specially formulated to break down and lift stubborn grout or sealer residue from tile surfaces. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- **Poultice treatment:** In some cases, a poultice made for tile and grout can help draw out deeper discoloration or residue left in surface textures. This is especially useful if the tile has a slight texture or

micro-pits that trapped the sealer. For detailed, step-by-step instructions on how to mix and apply a poultice correctly, check out our free [Stain Management App](#).

- **Avoid abrasives:** It may be tempting to scrub aggressively, but harsh pads or abrasive cleaners can damage ceramic tile finishes, especially glazed or polished ones.

We strongly recommend working with a stone and tile restoration PRO for situations like this. To find a vetted PRO in your area, visit www.surfacecarepros.com and click on **Find a PRO**. Your PRO has commercial-grade products that aren't available in most retail stores, as well as the knowledge and experience to choose the right solution based on your specific tile type and stain condition. In many cases, what looks like permanent staining can be successfully resolved with the right materials and methods

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