

## How can I fix blotchy travertine and protect it before selling my home?

**Q.** A little too late I've discovered that travertine was not the best choice for the master bathroom (walls and floor) of the house we are renovating for the purpose of selling. The semi polished stones looked lovely at the store but once installed and sealed at least 3 times with a penetrating sealant and buffed in between coatings, they were dismally blotchy and dull. So I polished the floor and walls with fine steel wool. The semi polished patina is back but the filled and softer areas are still dull and give stone a blotchy appearance. 3 questions: How do I protect the softer filled areas for the future new home owners? Also, does the polished glow on tile mean I removed the protection of the penetrating sealant that I used? Is there a way to have an even glow? The house is to be listed in about a week and half so I'm hoping for an answer fairly quickly. Thanks

**A.** The problem you describe isn't necessarily a mistake or a failure on your part.

Travertine has naturally occurring pits and voids throughout, and these unique characteristics are evident on the surface of cut stone tiles. Manufacturers often fill these voids to create a more finished appearance. The filled areas are inherently different than the surrounding stone. This means that when the stone is subjected to various conditions, such as being walked on, cleaned, sealed, or polished, the natural portions of the surface may respond differently than the filled areas. An uneven sheen or a blotchy appearance may result. Essentially, the finish of travertine can look uniform on a store or showroom shelf, but in the real-world, the variations in the surface can become more obvious.

Having said that, it is possible that something you did caused the unsightly

appearance.

When you polished or lightly abraded the surface with steel wool, the natural stone areas took on a shine, while the filled areas remained less reflective. That contrast may be what is creating the blotchy appearance you describe.

It's also possible that the sealer you applied is causing the uneven appearance. There are plenty of ways to go wrong with sealer. Maybe you used the wrong type of sealer, improperly applied it, or applied too much of it. The steel wool polishing probably removed some of the sealer you applied.

Keep in mind that penetrating sealers do not create shine. The reflectivity you see comes from the polished stone itself, not from the sealer. While the sealer helps protect against stains, it won't prevent uneven shine or create shine.

Because polishing removed or reduced the sealer in the areas you buffed, resealing is recommended to restore stain resistance.

A full professional honing and polishing can bring the entire surface to the same level of finish. To find a vetted PRO in your area, visit [www.surfacecarepros.com](http://www.surfacecarepros.com) and click on **Find a PRO**. Your PRO can select and apply the most appropriate sealer for your stone, including color-enhancing sealer, if you want. We highly recommend that you hire a PRO to provide these services rather than trying a DIY fix. That said, with your limited timeline before listing, a PRO may not be available on short notice.

Here are some suggestions about what you can realistically do on your own in the meantime.

- Start by cleaning the stone thoroughly to remove any steel wool residue. Fine steel wool can leave tiny metal particles that may rust later, so rinse and vacuum carefully.
- Next, reseal the stone with a high-quality penetrating sealer. While this won't fix the uneven shine, it will protect the stone for future

homeowners.

- To reduce the blotchy look, lightly hone the surface with a non-acidic honing powder made for travertine can help. This takes some of the shine off the harder areas so the finish looks more consistent overall. Understand that your stone won't be glossy. It will be less reflective, but it will be more even in appearance. It will look more like it has an intentionally satin/matte appearance.
- Finally, you can apply an enhancing sealer specifically made for travertine. This can enrich the color slightly and help even out the overall look, giving the bathroom a more cohesive appearance for potential buyers.

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