

What type of stone is on my countertop and how do I care for it?

Q. Hi - i need help identifying the type of stone on my countertop and the best materials to maintain/ care.

A. Without an image or description of your countertop, we cannot determine what type of stone you have. Nevertheless, we will do our best to provide as much helpful information as possible!

Does your stone have natural pits or holes across the surface, even if they've been filled? It might be travertine. In places like hot springs and caves where mineral-rich water flows, the water cools and leaves behind layers of calcium carbonate. This process creates the natural holes and pits you see travertine. Lighter and more porous than marble, travertine doesn't have marble's dense, crystalline look. It usually comes in warm, earthy colors such as cream, beige, tan, and brown.

Does your stone show veining, sometimes with translucent patches? It might be marble. When limestone or dolomite undergoes heat and pressure, marble is formed. Pure marble is white calcium carbonate, while mineral impurities such as iron oxide create colors and veining. It scratches more easily than quartzite or granite, and is susceptible to etch damage when exposed to acidic substances.

If your stone looks like marble but feels harder, glassier, or shows a slight sugary sparkle, it might be quartzite. Quartzite starts out as sandstone, and over time, heat and pressure turn it into a much harder stone. Because it's made of quartz and doesn't contain calcium carbonate, it won't etch or dull when exposed to acidic substances. Pure quartzite is usually white or gray, but other minerals can add colorful streaks or translucent patches. Quartzite is extremely difficult to scratch.

Does your stone have a speckled appearance with clearly visible individual crystals? It might be granite. As molten rock slowly cools and hardens deep in the Earth, granite is formed. It's made of several different minerals, which is why it often has a speckled look with visible crystals. Its colors can vary a lot, depending on which minerals are present. Granite feels very hard and slightly grainy to the touch, and it usually doesn't react to acidic foods or liquids.

If your stone can be scratched easily with a fingernail or coin, it might be soapstone. This type of stone feels soft, smooth, or slightly soapy, hence, its name. Its high talc content gives soapstone these characteristics. Even though it can be scratched easily, it is quite durable. Soapstone colors generally range from light gray to greenish or bluish gray. It can have subtle veining. Soapstone naturally darkens over time.

Still unsure about what type of stone you have? Try this test in a hidden spot. **NOTE: This test may damage the finish of your stone.** Place a drop of lemon juice or vinegar on your stone. If it leaves a dull spot or etch mark, your stone likely contains calcium carbonate, which means it is probably marble or travertine. If the stone stays unchanged and resists scratching, it is likely granite or quartzite, both of which are very hard and do not react to acids. If your countertops have etch damage, a stone restoration professional can hone and polish your countertop to like-new condition. To find a vetted PRO in your area, visit www.surfacecarepros.com and click on **Find a PRO**.

Once you know your stone type, caring for it properly will help it stay beautiful for many years. Here are some quick cleaning and care tips:

- Avoid using vinegar, which can cause etch damage.
- Avoid using glass cleaners, which can be harsh on stone and sealers.
- Avoid using dish soap, which can leave a residue that builds up over time.
- Use a stone-safe, pH-neutral cleaner.
- Clean up spills promptly.
- Do not scrub aggressively.

- Use coasters, trivets, hot dishes, and placemats.
- Sealing your countertops can help inhibit staining. You may want to hire a PRO to select and correctly apply the most appropriate sealer.

For more simple but important care instructions, download our free [Stone and Tile Care Guide](#).

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