



Paving Stones Direct UK LTD

Wall Cladding/Tiles Summary Installation Guide

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Introduction

Cladding a wall with natural stone or finishing it with high-performance porcelain tiles does more than transform the look of a space, it protects the structure beneath, extends its service life, and adds genuine value to the project. Yet long-term success hinges on meticulous preparation and methodical installation. This summary guide distils the essentials for both natural-stone wall cladding and porcelain wall tiles, spotlighting the critical checks (from substrate condition to expansion-joint layout) and the best-practice techniques (priming, back-buttering, drainage, tanking, and more) that ensure a flawless, durable finish.

- Ensure that the substrate that is to be tiled/clad upon is free from dust, cracks and structurally sound. The substrate should be sufficiently flat to receive the cladding or tile so as not to exceed the recommended depths of tile adhesive as per tile adhesives manufacturers specifications.
- Newly built concrete block walls should have sufficiently cured mortar prior to installation. Concrete blocks should also be sufficiently dry.
- Walls should have a damp proof membrane course or engineering bricks.
- Raised beds should have weep holes and sufficient drainage so as not to have pooling water and be free draining.
- Prime the substrate, with a suitable primer.
- Using a 4mm notch trowel apply a C2 S1 adhesive to the substrate and the back of the cladding or tile, also known as back buttering.
- The notches should run the shortest distance of the cladding or tile as per BS 5385-3:2024.
- Install the cladding or tile and compress so that the ribs on the back of the tile and substrate collapse flat with no voids. You can test this method by installing cladding or a tile and then removing to check if compaction is sufficient and ribs are not visible and the contact is full with no voids.
- Stack cladding should be installed to allow for tolerances, therefore a 1-2mm gap may be required.
- Porcelain tiles should have a 2-3mm joints and be grouted accordingly.
- Allowances should be made for expansion joints every 5m on long walls and corners.
- Don't clad or tile over expansion gaps in walls.
- Raised garden beds walls, retaining walls should have a tanking slurry applied to their rear.
- Copings should be installed to the tops of walls with drip line/capillary groove and double skin walls should have damp proof membrane bridging the cavity.

Summary

By following the checks and techniques set out in this summary guide, from ensuring a sound, well-primed substrate and using the correct C2 S1 adhesive, to allowing for drainage, expansion gaps, and proper joint widths, you'll give both natural-stone cladding and porcelain wall tiles the stable foundation they need to perform for decades.

Remember: meticulous preparation prevents costly failures; thoughtful detailing (weep holes, tanking, capillary grooves) safeguards the structure; and routine expansion joints protect the finish from seasonal movement. Carry out each step with care, verify your work as you go, and you'll deliver a wall that looks superb on day one and still earns compliments years down the line.

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