

HOW TO TILE A CEILING WITHOUT DROPPING TILES

Tiling a ceiling in the “olden days” was easy. Tiles were relatively small and lightweight, with ceramic bodies which absorbed water from the thinset, resulting in a fast thinset cure and few tiles dropped while the thinset was curing. Fast forward to 2021, where tiles are often porcelain which absorb very little water. This means a slow thinset cure time and a greater chance of a tile dropping while curing. Porcelain is also heavy, large tiles are popular, and small grout joints allow very little air to enter the joints, slowing the curing times and creating a precarious situation!

Here is how to keep the tiles up on the ceiling where they belong.

Tip 1: Flat coat the ceiling with thinset 1 day PRIOR to tiling

Ceilings are often not perfectly flat, which leads to poor thinset coverage and less suction. This can mean dropped tiles while thinset is still wet. Flat coating the ceiling 1 day prior helps create a flatter tiling surface. The cured “flat coated” thinset helps “suck” the moisture out of the fresh thinset when tiling the next day, speeding up the thinset cure and meaning less chance of falling tiles while the thinset is wet.

Tip 2: Use substrate specific thinsets

There are many great anti-sag wall thinsets designed with high initial “tack” while wet. A couple of examples are *Kiesel™ Servolight™* or *Laticrete™ MultiMax™*. These types of thinset work well for this application. It’s helpful to mix to the stiffest consistency allowed by the manufacturer. This will give you the highest degree of anti-sag / tack properties. Rapid set thinset may also be helpful, but it should be reserved for seasoned professionals, since rapid set thinsets have very short working times before they seize up in your pail.



Tip 3: Trowel technique

As noted, the ceiling should be coated with thinset the previous day. When installing the tiles the next day, installers often prefer to “scratch” fresh thinset onto the ceiling with the backside of their trowel, then with the notched side of the trowel spread thinset onto the entire backside of the tile, combing in one direction (along the shortest side of the tile) to ensure 95% minimum thinset coverage. The tile is then firmly pushed into the “scratched” ceiling. The notches on the backside of the tile should collapse creating a “whooshing” sound, meaning the mortar has compressed pushing out the air along the trowel ridges.

Tip 4: Use levelling clips

Levelling clips hold the tiles together in a large formation vs as individual pieces, meaning you are increasing the total sqft coverage of the bond area. So if one tile was to fall, they would all have to fall together, which is far less likely to happen.

Tip 5: Use support rods:

Often used in the drywall trade, support rods are vertical supports which extend from the floor upto the ceiling, locking into place. When installing large tiles, many professional installers will use support rods to make sure the tile cures overnight and remains on the ceiling the next morning.



example of “support rod”