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a buyer's guide to decorative tile

TEXT BY DAN DICLERICO PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID MEREDITH

FROM CONCRETE TO CERAMIC, TILE IS ONE OF THE MOST ADAPTABLE BUILDING BLOCKS OF HOME DESIGN.

WHEN IT COMES to creating beautiful rooms, tile is a true MVP—that's most *versatile* player. Along with traditional ceramic and stone, it is available in glass, metal, and concrete, "in a wonderful array of colors, patterns, and textures that makes tile an asset in any interior-design scheme," says Kevin Sharkey, decorating editorial director at *Martha Stewart Living*.

But this material is more than just a pretty face. It's also tough and (mostly) low maintenance. Spills wipe up easily, scratches are often hard to detect, and many types stand up to heavy foot traffic. To these virtues, add adaptability. Tile can be used to cover a wall, top a counter, or add a focal point—such as a mosaic over a kitchen range.

Which kind of tile should you buy? Start with what you like and what fits in with your décor. Beyond that, only a handful of rules apply. The following pages present the pros, cons, peculiarities, and common uses of each type. If you can't settle on just one, don't be afraid to mix and match materials. Tile is a real team player. »



AROUND THE HOUSE Tile performs in any setting. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Concrete makes a subtle fireplace surround. Ceramic is sleek and clean in a bath. Glass enlivens a laundry room. Terra-cotta warms an entry.