

# What to do and don't do when re-tiling a ceramic floor.

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I was invited over to shoot a re-tiling job for the TV show. The camera got there before I did, so they recorded some things that I thought would be good to show you so that I could point out why you should not work this way.

**Safety Glasses please** First our worker was hammering straight down on the tiles to break them off of the floor, without safety glasses to boot. If you could just watch him squinting his eyes with each blow some bells and whistles should be going off that there is need for eye protection here.

**Angle of attack** The second problem is that whacking that heavily on the floor could be causing damage someplace else. In fact if this was a thickset mortar floor, he could have created permanent cracks. He finally got it right by loosening the tiles with sidewise blows, and even better when he started forcing a wrecking bar horizontally at the mortar joint under the tile. That is the way to get tiles up without forcing the floor and endangering everyone and everything around.

Then he set about cleaning out the wall to floor joint, driving a chisel horizontally into the joint. This time he should have worked vertically, simply to avoid having that chisel jump up and scratch the finish on the side of the tub.

**Centering tiles to what?** He then carefully snapped a centre line down the middle of the room. That is when I arrived. He felt that something was wrong but wasn't sure what. When we stood out in the hallway and looked into the small bathroom it became obvious that the tiles would all appear to be off-centre because there was a small tiled hallway before opening into the main bathroom. The tiles needed to be centred up with the line of sight of that hallway. Besides, once inside the bathroom, the toilet and the cabinets would totally remove the visual effect of his first centre line.

**Cutting curves** When he got to cutting a curve out of one of the floor tiles to go around the toilet drain, he sawed and sawed and sawed with a little carbide coping saw that the local store had sold him for the job. Obviously it wasn't working. Even if he had gotten the carbide coated jig saw blade he wouldn't have gotten much further. These saws are made for wall tiles, not the much stronger floor tiles. Bad advice at the store.

About the only way to cut a curve in these tiles is to score a curve on the surface with the regular tile scoring tool used to cut straight lines, then "nibble" away at the scrap, breaking off a little at a time. He managed to get his small job done by working simply with pliers. Back in the studio (the last photo) I showed what professional tile nibblers look like. These are efficient at taking off a little tile at a time, right up to a score line.

If you have a diamond tile saw -- really not expensive any more and well worth it -- you could saw straight lines towards the outside score line, making it even easier to nibble off the rest. But the job came out looking great, a lot of sweat later.

**Keywords:**

Floors, Tiles, Ceramic, Demolition, Techniques, Tools, Safety