

Large format tile has become extremely popular over the past few years. It is defined as anything over 15 inches on any side. Most LFT have rectified edges, giving a natural and seamless look due to the minimal grout lines. However, it comes with some challenges because of its size and slight bowing. The installation techniques vary as the tile gets larger. It turns out beautifully, as long as these key steps listed below are taken.

1. The floor has to be extremely level when installing any large format tile. It cannot be off more than 1/8th of an inch for every 10-foot radius. There are various materials available to achieve this, including a self-leveler.
2. Using a medium bed mortar, such as Mapei LFT, is the most important factor in large format tile installation. A mud set will not do, as it does not contain any bonding agents (polymer). The bigger the tile, the more polymers a thin-set will require to adhere to the back of the tile and obtain maximum coverage. The medium bed mortar also aids in leveling the tiles.
3. The last key component is an adequate leveling system. Rubi Tools has a fool-proof system (TILE LEVEL QUICK SYSTEM) to avoid any lippage that may occur. The system includes leave-in spacers that create 1/16th of an inch grout joint, re-usable leveling caps and pliers to ensure zero lippage.

Tile is also categorized by the following:

1. Rectified or Pressed: Rectified tile has a 90-degree edge that allows the grout joints to be 1/16th of an inch. Pressed tile has a rounder edge that allows the grout joints to be 1/8th of an inch.
2. Print Type: The most basic type is called a screen print. Screen print tile offers no variation from tile to tile. It is not widely used due to the more advanced technology now offered. The second type is called roto color and creates a mild variation. For example, a box containing nine roto printed tiles will normally have 2 or 3 different tile prints in the same carton. The third type is an inkjet print. This type creates only a few repeats in an entire pallet. The Chateau line is inkjet print tile.
3. Caliber and Dye-lots: The caliber refers to the thickness, width and length of the tile. It is extremely important that every tile, pressed or rectified, is the same size. If not, installation will be unreasonably difficult. A dye-lot is the shade of the tile from a particular production run. For screen or roto print tiles, dye-lot matches are important because of their lack of variation. Due to the high quality that inkjet provides, it is unnecessary for a dye-lot match from one pallet to the next.