

BELTILE MATERIAL GUIDE

What to Expect with Zellige

An informational guide to the color, surface, size and edge variation that gives authentic handmade zellige its distinctive character.

HANDMADE CERAMIC

VARIATION EXPECTED

MINIMUM OVERAGE 15%

BEFORE
INSTALLATION

Open and
blend every
carton

BEFORE
CHOOSING
COLOR

Review
samples in
your lighting

This is an informational guide. For mortar, grout, waterproofing and application requirements, review the separate BelTile Zellige Installation Guide.



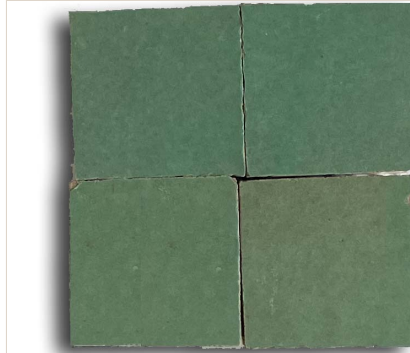
01 • HANDMADE CHARACTER

No Two Zellige Tiles Are Exactly Alike

Zellige is valued for movement, reflection and variation. The finished surface is intentionally more organic than a machine-made ceramic installation.

**Color variation**

Tiles from the same color family may appear lighter, darker, warmer or cooler.

**Shape and dimension**

Hand finishing creates small differences in width, length, squareness and edge alignment.

**Glaze movement**

Gloss, texture and glaze coverage may shift from one piece to another.

Color and glaze variation

The glaze reacts differently across individual clay bodies and through the firing process. One carton can include pieces with noticeably different depth, saturation and reflectivity. This tonal range is part of the material, not an indication that the order contains mismatched colors.

Light also catches handmade surfaces unevenly, so two similarly colored pieces can appear different from opposite viewing angles.

Mineral spots and glaze marks

Small dark spots, pale spots, specks or marks may appear where naturally occurring minerals react with the clay and glaze. These marks contribute to the handcrafted appearance and are generally distributed throughout the installation during blending.

**The goal is a balanced installation, not perfect uniformity.**

A skilled layout spreads light, dark, glossy, matte and more visibly irregular pieces across the field.

02 • GLAZE AND SURFACE

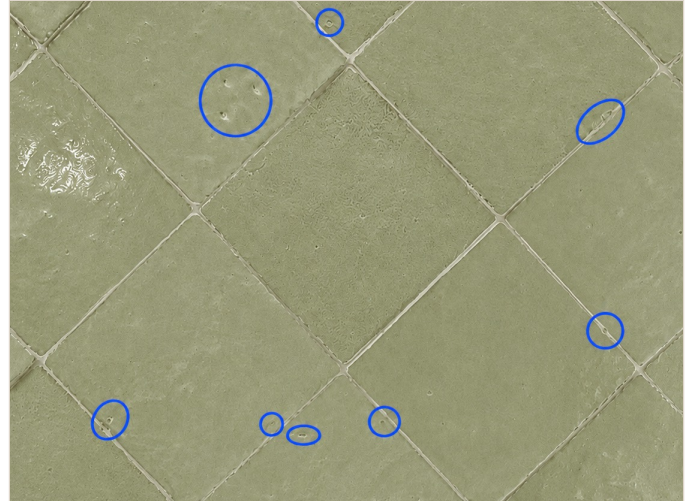
Crazing, Pits and Edge Chipping

These traits are among the most recognizable features of zellige. They should be reviewed before installation so the intended visual range is understood.



Crazing

Fine hairline lines in the glaze surface. Crazing affects the glaze appearance and is different from a structural crack through the tile body.



Pits and chipped edges

Blue circles identify pinholes, surface pits, open edge chips and small irregularities that may be visible before grouting.

Crazing versus crackle glaze

Crazing is the visible network of fine lines in the glaze.
Crackle glaze describes a glaze intentionally formulated to produce that effect. Authentic zellige may develop crazing during firing, cooling or over time.

How grout changes the appearance

Grout may fill open pits, minor edge chips and naturally occurring gaps. A grout color close to the tile creates a quieter look; strong contrast emphasizes every tile outline and surface opening.



Test dark or highly pigmented grout first.

Pigment can settle into exposed clay, pits and crazing. A compatible penetrating sealer or grout release may be appropriate after testing.

03 · SIZE AND SHAPE

Expect Irregular Edges and Dimensional Variation

Zellige is shaped and finished by hand. Shrinkage during drying and firing adds another layer of natural variation.



Width and length
Pieces may not be perfectly square or exactly the same size.



Edge shape
Edges can be chipped, rounded, tapered or slightly uneven.



Joint variation
Even when placed closely, gaps naturally widen and narrow across the layout.

- 1

Dry lay first

Review the edge range and choose the intended overall appearance.
- 2

Sort thoughtfully

Reserve more regular pieces for exposed edges or critical alignments.
- 3

Adjust by hand

Individual pieces may need alignment, spacing or mortar adjustment.
- 4

Accept movement

A perfectly flat, machine-uniform surface should not be expected.

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Floor installations need additional review.

Natural lippage and edge variation can be more noticeable underfoot. The installer should balance the desired handmade texture with practical levelness and maintenance needs.

04 • BEFORE INSTALLATION

Open, Inspect and Blend Every Carton

Installing one carton at a time can create blocks of color or texture. The complete order should be treated as one material palette.



A blended installation

The shade and reflectivity shift across this shower, but the overall field reads as one cohesive color.

1

Verify

Confirm the product, color, size, finish and quantity.

2

Open

Unpack enough tile to see the full shade and surface range.

3

Mix

Blend pieces from several cartons before setting begins.

4

Approve

Review a representative dry layout under project lighting.

How much overage?

BelTile recommends ordering at least **15% additional material** for cutting, breakage and handmade variation. Order more when the project involves many cuts, future attic stock or a preference for selecting out pieces with more pronounced characteristics.



Do not discard every irregular piece.

Removing all pits, chips, crazing and color shifts can strip the installation of the character that defines authentic zellige.

05 · SEE THE COLOR IN YOUR SPACE

Lighting and Surroundings Change the Appearance

Glossy handmade glaze reflects the room around it. Daylight, warm bulbs, cool bulbs, cabinetry, wall color and shadows can all influence how a zellige color is perceived.

**Sage in natural lighting**

Daylight reveals a cooler, lighter and more varied reading of the glaze.

**Sage in artificial lighting**

Warm interior light makes the same tile appear deeper, warmer and slightly more muted.

**The tile in both photos is the same color.**

Only the lighting and surroundings changed.

Sample more than one piece

A single tile cannot show the complete shade range. Review at least three pieces, and more for highly varied colors, before making a final selection.

Move samples through the room

View samples beside cabinetry, counters, flooring and paint. Check them during the morning, afternoon and evening, and under the artificial lights that will actually be used.

06 • FINISHING EXPOSED EDGES

Plan Corners and Terminations Before Installation

Many zellige installations end at an inside corner, adjacent wall or ceiling. Where an edge remains exposed, the project may use a trim piece or a mitered tile edge.



Separate trim piece

Some collections include narrow trim pieces designed to finish an exposed edge.



Mitered corner

A tile edge can be cut at approximately 45 degrees to create a wrapped corner.



Finished transition

Choose the approach that best suits the tile thickness, exposure and desired visual detail.

Wall-to-wall or floor-to-ceiling

Extending tile into an adjoining surface can eliminate a visible termination. Confirm the layout early so cut pieces do not leave awkward slivers at corners.

Wet-area note

Zellige may be used on suitable shower walls over a correctly designed waterproofing system. Tile and grout are decorative finishes and do not replace waterproofing.



Glazed zellige is not recommended for wet walking surfaces.
Refer to the full BelTile Zellige Installation Guide for DCOF, floor-rating and wet-area limitations.

07 • KNOW WHAT IS NORMAL

Expected Characteristics vs. Issues to Report

Review the complete order before installation. Handmade variation is expected, while shipping damage or an incorrect product should be addressed promptly.

Expected zellige characteristics

- Shade and tonal variation
- Different levels of gloss and glaze coverage
- Crazing in the glaze
- Pinholes, pits and mineral spots
- Small edge chips and exposed clay
- Uneven, rounded or tapered edges
- Variation in width, length and thickness
- Naturally changing grout-joint widths

Contact BelTile before installation

- The wrong product, color, size or finish was received
- The shipment quantity is incomplete
- There is substantial transit breakage beyond the ordered overage
- Tiles show major structural damage that prevents installation
- The material is not suitable for the intended application
- The delivered range is materially different from the approved project requirements

COMMON QUESTIONS

Before You Approve the Material

Is crazing the same as a cracked tile?

No. Crazing is a network of fine lines in the glaze. A structural crack passes through the clay body and may affect whether a piece can be installed.

Should every chipped or pitted piece be removed?

No. Those features are part of zellige. The installer may distribute them throughout the field, reserve some for cuts, or selectively remove pieces where the project calls for a more controlled appearance.

Why does the installed color look different from the sample?

Zellige reflects its surroundings. Lighting, grout color, wall color, nearby finishes and the full shade blend can all change how the final color is perceived.

General notice: Zellige is handmade. Samples and photographs show the general character but cannot represent every tile in a future order. For setting, grout, sealing, flooring and wet-area requirements, use the separate BelTile Zellige Installation Guide.

[INSTALLATION GUIDE](#)[CONTACT BELTILE](#)