

AFRICOTTA

AFRICAN INSPIRED HANDMADE TILES

TILING GUIDELINES

PREPARATION | INSTALLATION
FINISHING | MAINTENANCE

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO INSTALLING AND CARING FOR YOUR HANDCRAFTED CEMENT TILES.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 Floor Preparation

02 Tile Layout and Adhesive Application

03 Tile Spacing

04 Cleaning During Installation

05 Acid Wash (Day Two)

06 Oiling (Optional) (Day Three)

07 Grouting

08 Final Oiling (Optional)

09 Sealing Process (Mandatory)

10 Maintenance

11 Exterior Tiles

12 Exterior Tiling – Drainage & Maintenance



01 FLOOR PREPARATION

1. Remove all existing floor coverings, including carpets, Novilon, wood blocks, or any other materials.

2. Ensure the substrate is **clean, dry, and free from glue, dust, or any residues** from previous floor coverings.

3. If the floor surface is significantly uneven, a **levelling screed may need to be applied,** or additional tile adhesive may be required to compensate for irregularities.

4. For **powdery or smooth surfaces where old adhesive cannot be fully removed,** apply the following bonding slurry:

- Mix approximately **1 litre of Latex (Cottabond)** with **½ kg OPC cement (Alpha or PPC).**
- Form a concentrated slurry and **apply using a brush or sponge**.
- Allow to dry completely before tiling.
- Additional batches may be prepared depending on the size of the floor area.

02 TILE LAYOUT & ADHESIVE APPLICATION (DAY ONE)

1. Complete the **final tile layout planning** before installation begins.

2. Mix the tile adhesive to a **smooth paste consistency.**

3. Apply adhesive using a **10 mm notched tiling trowel.**

4. Back-buttering the tiles is optional but recommended for improved adhesion.

5. Place tiles into the **10 mm grooved adhesive bed** and gently move them into position while checking alignment and level.

6. Ensure tiles are level by:

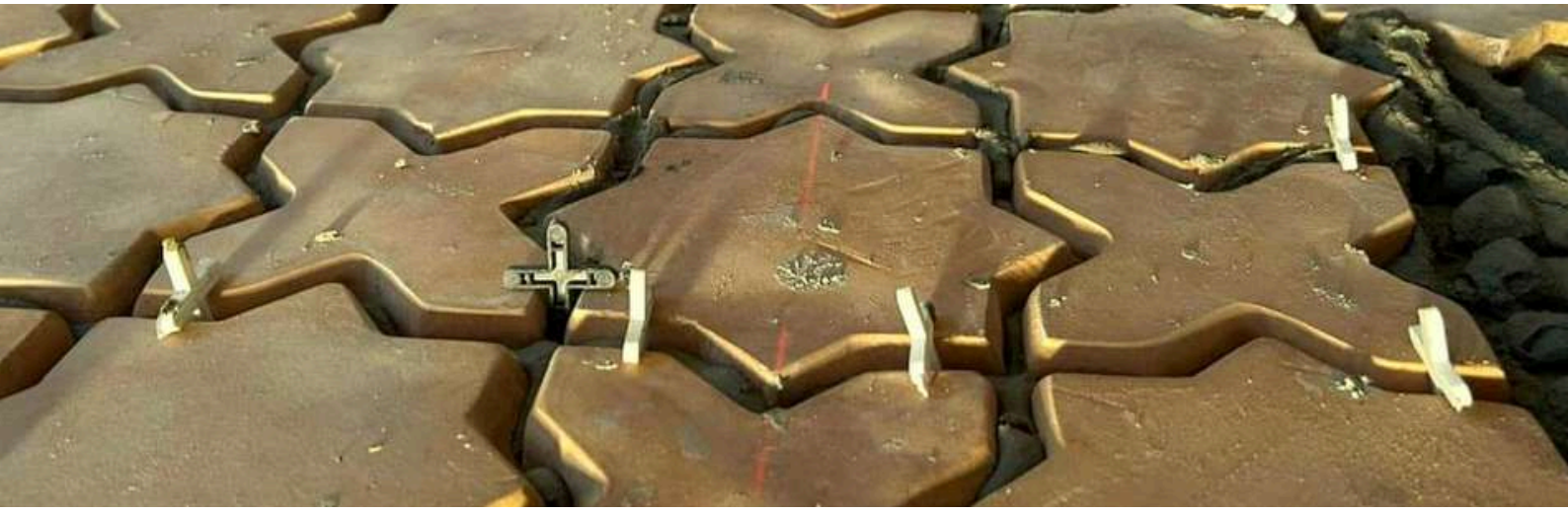
- **Running your hand across adjacent tiles** to detect height differences.
- Using a **spirit level** where necessary.

7. If unevenness is detected, **remove and reset the tile immediately.**



03 TILE SPACING

Tile spacers are optional but recommended to ensure consistent spacing. Various spacer sizes may be used depending on the desired grout width. In the absence of standard spacers, small dowels or trimmed pieces of broomstick may be used.



04 CLEANING DURING INSTALLATION



1. Remove excess adhesive between tiles to increase grout depth and prevent adhesive wastage.

2. Clean each tile with a **moist sponge** immediately after installation to avoid difficult cleaning later.

3. Allow the tiled surface to **dry overnight** before walking on it.



05 ACID WASH (DAY TWO)

(EXCLUDING ASH AND SANDSTONE)

Africotta suggests that the Acid Wash is not done on the Ash and Sandstone Tiles

Make sure that the Tiles are completely dry before walking on them. Once the adhesive has cured and the tiles can be walked on:

1. Prepare an acid solution:

- **1 part Hydrochloric Acid (pool acid) to 20 parts water.**
- For lighter tiles (e.g. Molopo), dilute further to **1:30.**

2. Wash the tile surface using a **rag or firm sponge** to remove cement residue, salts, or other deposits.

3. Immediately rinse the floor thoroughly with **clean water** to neutralise any remaining acid.

4. Remove excess water and allow the surface to **dry completely.**

Note: The rinsing process is most effective when performed immediately by a second person during washing.

06 OILING - OPTIONAL (DAY THREE)

Before oiling, test on a **sample tile** to determine::

- Whether oiling is required
- The number of coats desired

Oiling is **not compulsory** and is typically used to enhance the colour of the cement tiles.

1. Prepare a **50/50 mixture of boiled linseed oil and turpentine**.
2. Apply to the tile surface only.
3. **Do not apply the oil mixture to the tile edges within the grout joints**, as this may prevent grout adhesion.

For certain lighter tiles such as **Ash and Sandstone**, oiling is generally unnecessary. Instead, **apply one coat of Nova 3 sealant** before grouting,





07 GROUTING

Grouting can commence **once the oil mixture** (or Nova 3 for Ash and Sandstone) **has been absorbed**. Oiling or sealing before grouting helps protect tiles from grout staining.

Recommended grout mixture:

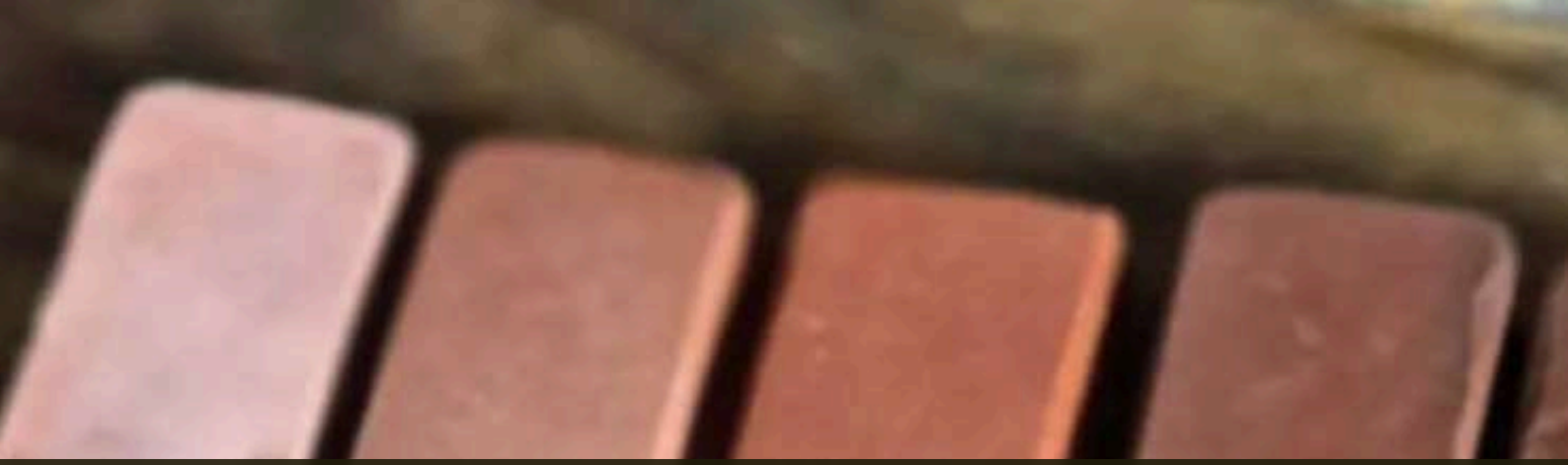
- 50 kg OPC Cement (1:42.5)
- 5 L Cembond
- 150 kg Plaster Sand
- Sufficient water to form a workable paste

This mixture covers approximately **30 m^2** (adjust quantities proportionally for smaller areas).

Application:

1. Carefully place grout mixture into the joints.
2. Work the mixture thoroughly to remove trapped air and ensure full joint penetration.
3. Smooth the joints using a **moist sponge** while cleaning tile surfaces.
4. Ideally, grout joints should sit **slightly below the tile surface**. For areas requiring additional slip resistance, grout may be finished slightly **above tile level (convex).**

Allow grout to **dry slowly**, avoiding strong drafts. Slower curing improves strength and durability. Where possible, extend drying beyond 24 hours.



08 FINAL OILING - OPTIONAL

Once the grout has cured:

1. Clean the floor if necessary and allow it to dry completely.

2. Apply the **50/50 boiled linseed oil and turpentine mixture by rubbing it** into the tile surface with a sponge.

3. Apply **up to four coats,** allowing several hours between coats depending on temperature.

4. Remove any excess oil mixture immediately to prevent sticky residue.

For certain lighter tiles such as **Ash and Sandstone,** oiling is generally unnecessary. Instead, apply **two coats of Nova 3 sealant** after grouting.



09 SEALING PROCESS - MANDATORY

Choosing the Right Finish

- **Nova 2** – Gloss Finish
- **Nova 3** – Matt Finish

Recommended Finish by Colour

- **African Ash:** No acid wash and no oil. Seal directly with Nova 3.
- **Sandstone:** No acid wash and no oil. Seal directly with Nova 3.
- **Molopo:** No acid wash and no oil. Seal directly with Nova 3.
- **Stone:** No acid wash. Apply 1 coat of the oil mixture, then the Nova sealer.
- **Terracotta, Copper Terracotta, Copper Terracotta Light, Limpopo, Senegal, Tabacco & Thutu:** These colours must be acid-washed. Apply 2 coats of the oil mixture, then the Nova sealer.
- **Charcoal:** Apply 4 coats of oil, followed by the Nova sealer.



Very Important – Before You Start

1. **Please call us for advice.** We are happy to guide you through the finishing process and help you achieve the look you want.

2. **Always use a few extra tiles as test tiles first.** Test the acid wash, oil mixture and sealer combination until you are completely happy with the colour and finish before applying it to the full installation.

3. **The finishing stage is a crucial part of an AfriCotta installation.** Be hands-on and personally oversee this part of the process. Small changes in washing, oil application and sealing can make a significant difference to the final appearance.

TEST FIRST. GET THE FINISH PERFECT. THEN PROCEED WITH THE FULL INSTALLATION.

10 MAINTENANCE

Cement tiles naturally **age and mature over time.** Minor colour variations may gradually disappear or reappear.

If this occurs, **it may indicate the need to reapply Nova 3 sealer or the 50/50 boiled linseed oil and turpentine mixture..** This typically becomes necessary after **12–18 months,** depending on usage.



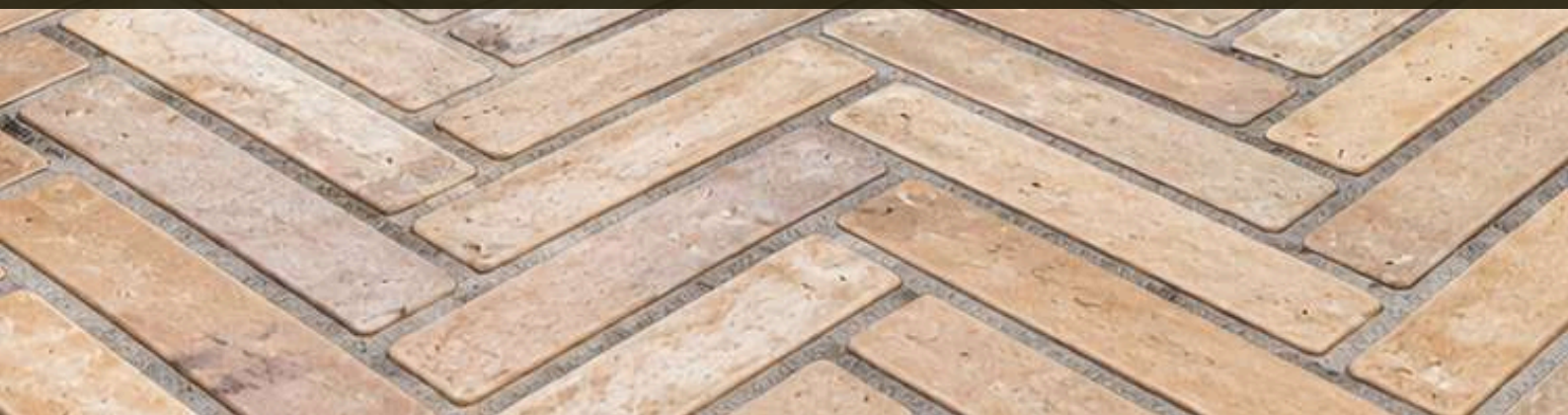
11 IMPORTANT: EXTERIOR TILES

1• **KEEP DRY**: Cover newly installed exterior tiles with plastic to protect them from rain while drying. Ensure the plastic is raised/ventilated so moisture is not trapped underneath. Tiles must be 100% dry before oiling or sealing. Never seal damp tiles.

2• **CLEANING:** For normal cleaning, use Sunlight soap and water only. Avoid harsh chemicals.

3• **CLOUDY/FLECKED AFTER SEALING:** This may indicate trapped moisture. Test Nova 10 on 1–2 tiles to remove Nova 3, rinse thoroughly, and allow tiles to dry completely before refinishing.

ALWAYS TEST 1–2 TILES FIRST.



12 EXTERIOR TILING: DRAINAGE & MAINTENANCE

1• DRAINAGE: Exterior tiles exposed to direct rainfall should always be installed with a slight slope to allow water to drain naturally and prevent pooling.

2• WHITE SURFACE MARKS: When rainwater or irrigation water evaporates, it may leave white mineral deposits on the Nova 3 protective finish. Although Nova 3 helps protect the tiles, it does not prevent surface residue from forming.

3• CLEANING: Wash with clean water and a mild detergent, such as Sunlight Liquid. Gently scrub with a soft brush, rinse thoroughly and allow to dry completely.

4• BUFFING: For a smoother finish with a slight sheen, gently buff the dry tiles using a low-speed, variable-speed grinder or handheld floor polisher fitted with a soft Tork Craft Hook & Loop polishing sponge and compatible backing pad. Test a small area first and avoid high speeds.

Buffing may make future residue easier to remove. Regular cleaning, particularly after rainfall, is recommended to maintain the natural beauty of your AfriCotta tiles.

Where possible, prevent sprinkler water from regularly coming into contact with the tiles.



FINAL NOTES

Installing Africotta tiles yourself can be both **cost-effective and rewarding.** Whether completed individually or as a family project, it offers a unique opportunity to apply creativity and craftsmanship to your space.

FOR ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CONTACT:

info@africotta.co.za

061 952 1857

Africotta

