

Tile Setter

Cut and set tile and stone on floors, walls and showers. Work that people look at every day for thirty years.

TYPICAL PAY

\$55,690

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$37k to \$86k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

New houses, bathroom and kitchen remodels, hotels, hospitals and air...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or an equivalency certificate** Grade 12
 Math and shop classes help. Employers care that you are 18, reliable and can lift boxes of tile all day.
- 2 Get hired as a helper, or apply to an apprenticeship** Weeks to months
 Two doors in: a tile contractor who takes you on as a helper, or a registered apprenticeship run by a union training center or a state agency.
- 3 Register the apprenticeship** Days
 A registered program is signed off by the federal Office of Apprenticeship or your state apprenticeship agency, which locks in your hours and your raise schedule.
- 4 Paid work plus classroom training** 2 to 4 years
 Registered apprenticeships in the trowel trades run on roughly 2,000 hours of paid work plus about 144 hours of classroom instruction a year.
- 5 Journeyman setter, then certification** After the hours
 Finish the hours and you work at the full rate. Many setters then sit the Certified Tile Installer test to prove it to customers.

Pros and cons

- + Paid from day one, basically no debt
- + Fully skilled in two to four years
- + You can point at bathrooms and lobbies you built
- Knees, wrists and back take a beating for decades
- Wet saw dust and silica exposure need real respirators, not a paper mask
- Remodeling work dries up fast when the economy turns

Good to know

The floor under the tile decides everything

Tile does not crack because the tile is weak. It cracks because the floor under it flexes. A big part of the trade is testing and fixing the subfloor before a single tile goes down, which is why good setters sp...

There is one recognized skills test

The Ceramic Tile Education Foundation describes its Certified Tile Installer program as the only outside assessment of installer skill and knowledge that the tile industry recognizes. You build a real section o...

Optional boosts

Certified Tile Installer. Waterproofing and shower systems. Large format tile and thin panels. Natural stone and slab work.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Tile and Stone Setters
 Ceramic Tile Education Foundation, the Certified Tile Installer program
 International Masonry Institute, training and apprenticeships for the trowel trades
 Apprenticeship.gov, the federal Registered Apprenticeship site

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/tile-setter>



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