

These days the bathroom is no longer simply a functional room, full of practical, if a little dated, furnishing. Today's bathroom has become much more about combining practicality with indulgence; it is your own private sanctuary, a place of relaxation and refuge where the children can't pester and the stresses of everyday life can be gently soaked away.

Additionally, a quality bathroom is as valuable an asset in selling a house as a well-designed kitchen – as all the makeover programmes tell us. Creating a perfect bathroom requires forward planning, especially if you fancy moving those essentials around. However, a huge difference can be made if the basic sanitary ware is acceptable by replacing dated or boring tiling.

Whether you're going for a total revamp or some simple redecoration, the tiling in a bathroom can make all the difference. When tiling your own private sanctuary you need to take many factors into consideration. Are you looking to create a luxurious period bathroom, or would you prefer contemporary city chic? Are you totally revamping a large room or looking to give a small bathroom a bit of a face-lift?

Glazed tiles are considered the norm but even here there is such a huge variety available – where do you start? Consider the size and airiness of the room. A small room can be opened up by using neutral colours and pale shades. This can also help to create that serene, quiet sanctuary you might be seeking. A larger bathroom can be made to feel more cosy by using stronger, darker colours, perfect for a warm soak on a wintry evening.

Mosaic tiles are currently some of the most fashionable and the ranges available vary from sheets of simple one-colour gems to glistening iridescent combinations. If you're not looking to re-tile a whole room, a border of mosaic tiles can add a splash of colour and liven up a room. Be careful if you have a small bathroom – too much mosaic work and all you may end up seeing is grouting. Mixing the scale of tiles – especially if they are from the same design family – would be an inspired way of adding depth and perspective (e.g. Fired Earth's Sardinia 30x45cm and Sicilian Mosaic tiles look beautifully serene, imitating their stone forebears, yet are easy to clean as they are ceramic).

If you are looking to restore your bathroom to former period glory then you need both to research and to look carefully to find the appropriate décor. Recreating a period room needn't be an expensive process – one or two décor tiles amongst a series of base tiles can give the impression you're looking for. It's also a good idea to consider replacing fittings, as a pair of shining Victorian-style taps can quickly draw the eye and help you to achieve your look.



Tiled Out

Eva Shephard of Fired Earth Interiors considers the options available when retiling your bathroom

A tiled floor in your bathroom can create an immediate impact. Traditional black and white check floor tiles can immediately take a room into a period style, whilst Roman mosaics can bring the ultimate luxury of the Roman baths straight into your home. If you are after a more natural look then consider limestone or marble for a relaxing neutral basis for a room. The more contemporary minded might like to try some of the more innovative tiles on the market, such as textured glass tiles; and, for a more unusual approach, it is worth considering using all of the above on the wall too.

If a total revamp is required, consider the growing trend, particularly for the smaller bathroom, of the wet room. It does away with confining shower cubicles as the floor slopes gently to a central drain and becomes the base of the shower. Wet rooms require lining to cope with the constant water bombardment and the floor is often raised slightly to allow for drainage. Choose slate or stone floor tiles (ensuring they are suitable for such a wet environment), and avoid glossy surfaces for obvious reasons. It pays to get the specialists in on this makeover as companies such as Fired Earth will utilise their many years of technical know-how in ensuring your room stays watertight and beautiful for years.

If ultimately you feel about as inspired as your current crumbly bath sponge, call in the experts! Many tile retailers will assist you in your choices, with Fired Earth even having a home design consultant based in-store who will provide you with designs and schemes for your new room (not only bathrooms) for a small refundable fee. True design is available to us all – even if all you want is a background foil to your current bathing beauty. □

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