

HALLMARK STONE

Bringing nature's beauty into your life.

Guide to Understanding Your New Countertops

www.hallmarkstone.com

“Be Informed About Templating and Installing Your Natural Stone Countertops”

Thank you for purchasing one of the most beautiful and durable countertops on the market. We have created this booklet to ensure that you understand the features of Granite and Quartz and are familiar with the templating, tear-out, and the installation process. In making sure you are informed, we hope to ensure your satisfaction.

What is Natural Granite?

Granite is a natural stone, formed when molten rock from the center of the earth's core was pushed to the surface. The beauty, which only nature provides, is inherent in every piece of granite making it truly a designer's choice. Its extreme hardness, which approaches that of diamonds, makes granite uncommonly durable and extremely appealing for use every day in the home. Nations through the ages have chosen granite to memorialize their significant achievements and milestones. From ancient cathedrals to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, granite's beauty endures forever. The customer may select from Hallmark's selection of fine stone or may make special arrangements to hand select slabs from a Hallmark Stone Supplier.

What is Quartz?

Quartz surfacing is composed of natural materials, 93% of which are the finest quartz and granite aggregates. This natural stone product has taken the best of what nature has to offer in terms of the durability and the beauty of stone. Through extensive engineering, a manufacturing process was developed utilizing intense pressure and heat to increase the color consistency, stain resistance and strength of this natural stone product. Being non-porous, Quartz does not require the use of sealants, and it withstands typical wear and tear beautifully. Professionally developed colors are computer-calibrated to maintain consistency, allowing designers and customers to make the perfect selection from samples.

Be Informed About Templating

Why do I need to be there when they are templating my kitchen for countertops? The customer must be on-site at the time of templating to review any radiused corners, review seam locations, overhangs and other issues, which commonly arise. Templates are the basis for fabricating your countertops and the tops will be made to match the templates. Any changes to the tops requested after template will be done entirely at the customers' expense and may significantly delay installation. Therefore, the person on-site at the time of templating is the final authority and has full responsibility for signing off on the templates. It is not a good idea to request a relative or neighbor to take on this responsibility.

Do I need to have my existing countertops removed prior to templating? While it is preferred to template with the tops off, there are many cases where we can complete a template without removing countertops. For angled tops, radiused tops, or in cases where tile splash or no splash will be installed, the existing tops may need to be removed prior to templating. During template, it may be necessary to cut off the backsplash of your existing countertop. This could chip or split the finish, making the tops unable to be reused. If you wish to reuse your tops, please inform the templater before template begins. No compensation will be given for damage to existing tops.

If your countertops are straight and you are purchasing 4" splash or full height backsplash, your countertops may not need to be removed. Measurements may be taken for use in producing templates if the person templating your countertop is completely confident of his ability to get accurate measurements. Countertops measured in this manner will be made to allow for space behind tops for variances in the walls. When the backsplash is installed it will cover these gaps.

What do I need to do to prepare for the Templater?

The following checklist should be used as your guide to prepare for templating:

- _____ New sinks, faucets, & appliances (cooktops & slide in ranges) must be on-site at the time templates are made.
- _____ All items should be removed from your countertops.

- _____ All breakable items should be removed from the immediate area (large pieces of template board will be carried in and out of your house)
- _____ Stone selection and edge selection should be complete and confirmed with your Templater.
- _____ Cabinets must be fully and permanently installed including all finished panels before templates can be made. (Some cabinets are installed with finished panels on the ends and some are not. If finished panels are added after we template, the templates must be rechecked to ensure overhangs are correct).

Be Informed about Tear out and Installation

Prior to removing your countertops, the sink, faucets, and your dishwasher will need to be disconnected. Most homes have shut-off valves under the sink. If your home does not have shut-off valves, a plumber should be contacted to have them installed. A countertop installation may take several days and shut-off valves for the kitchen faucets must be in place to avoid having the water completely shut-off to your home for this period of time.

Some unavoidable damage may be done to existing tile, backsplashes, drywall, wallpaper and paint during tear out and installation. This type of damage occurs with most installations and the customer should be prepared to make these touchups once the countertops are installed. Existing tile often comes dislodged when removing existing tops. The installer is not responsible for replacing dislodged or broken tiles.

If you wish to reuse existing fixtures (sink, faucet, etc.), Hallmark Stone will not be able to remove them. You will be responsible for their removal and safekeeping until time of template. Hallmark Stone recommends purchasing new fixtures with your new countertops.

During installation, a substantial number of trips will be made from the outside work area to the kitchen. Please clear a path for the installer to use. Please remove all valuables from the area including children and pets.

Cooktop cutouts and drop-in sink cutouts are made on site because the front and back rail of the sink and cooktop are too thin to allow the tops to be transported without breaking. Standard industry practice is to cut the openings once the tops are secured in place using a diamond saw. A vacuum will be held as the cutting is done to catch as much dust as possible.

Sink cut-outs and cooktop cut-outs made in the field will be left for the customer only if the customer requests it directly from the installer making the cutout. The pieces are not square, will be rough-cut, and no edges will be polished. The request must be done at the time of the installation. Absolutely no cutouts will be brought to the job site from openings made in the shop. The price for these cutouts is not included in your job. These cutouts come out in small and very sharp irregular pieces that are thrown out and recycled using our gravel crusher.

Undermount Sinks are very popular with Granite and Quartz. Undermount sink cutouts will be made to overhang the sink bowls by approximately ¼ inch. The overhang over the bowls will vary slightly as each sink varies slightly from the master template used by Hallmark Stone to cut sink cutouts. No reveal will be shown on the sink despite sink manufacturer's recommendations. Customers generally do not want to display the reveal of the sink, as it will tend to collect crumbs and other debris swept off the countertops. A reveal can be requested, however; it must be confirmed in writing by Hallmark Stone Company and additional fees may apply.

While the installers' service includes clean up (broom swept), the customer should expect some dust to continue to settle after the installer has cleaned up and left. Please be prepared to wipe dust for a few days after the installer leaves. To minimize dust in other parts of the home, some customers choose to put up a partition (a sheet is often used) between the rooms undergoing work and adjoining rooms.

Scheduling for the reconnection of cooktops and plumbing should be done the day after installation of countertops to prevent tops from shifting while the silicone adhesive is drying.

If you would like us to coordinate the plumbing reconnect for you, please call the office and we will be happy to assist you.

The installation of granite countertops and splashes will require that the installer trim the countertops and splash at the installation site to ensure the best possible fit. This procedure is usually performed on the driveway or on the back porch, provided that it is not raining. If it is raining, a covered place for the installer to work must be available or the installer will have to reschedule the installation.

Mirrors in bathrooms that are permanently affixed to the wall and resting on or 1" above the top of the existing backsplash or countertops must be removed before tear-out. Any damage to mirrors not removed will be the responsibility of the homeowner.

What will be done if my cabinets are not level?

If your cabinets are out of level $\frac{1}{8}$ " – $\frac{1}{4}$ ", shimming will be required. If your cabinets are out of level $\frac{1}{4}$ " – $\frac{1}{2}$ ", the countertops can be shimmed but the gap will have to be caulked or covered with wood trim by the homeowner. The homeowner can request the installer to caulk this gap but additional fees will apply. Note: to caulk properly, masking tape must be applied to cabinet faces. **No responsibility will be taken for damage to the finish of cabinets caused by removing painters' grade masking tape.** If the cabinets are more than $\frac{1}{2}$ " out of level, your install may have to be postponed until your carpenter is able to level the cabinets.

Are my cabinets structurally sound to handle the weight of stone?

Most cabinets are able to easily handle the weight of natural stone countertops; however, it is often not possible to assess cabinet problems when the templates are made. Installers may be able to reinforce cabinetry; however, additional fees will apply. If significant bracing and cabinet reinforcement is required, the installers will need to put our installation on hold until the homeowner can have the cabinets corrected. Countertop orders cannot be cancelled at this point.

Most Granite and Quartz applications contain seams. **Granite and Quartz seams can be seen and felt.** While we will indicate the most likely location of your seams when you countertops are templated, we reserve the right to change the location of the seams while we are fabricating the tops. Stone with a definite veining direction may require additional seams to ensure vein direction on all pieces is consistent. In addition, physical access issues such as stairs and doorways may require

pieces to be made smaller. An order cannot be cancelled due to changes in seam location.

Installers will attempt to make the seams as tight as possible. The acceptable industry standard for seams is up to 1/8" wide and 1/32" rise for every 12" of seam. Natural stone (Quartz and Granite) does not flex and is not perfectly flat, stone shrinks and swells over time, and slabs vary in thickness so it is not possible to always have a perfectly flat seam.

During transportation and/or installation a top can and will sometimes break. Should a Granite or Quartz countertop or backsplash break, Hallmark Stone will remake the top and prioritize the installation of the new top within a few days. Delays may occur in order to have additional stone supplied to remake pieces. No compensation will be provided for delays occurring due to a broken top or splash.

Customers planning parties or events in their home should be cautioned to provide several weeks of cushion before hosting an event in their home, as delays in major construction projects are common and occur for many unforeseen reasons. No compensation will be provided for delays or for the impact these delays may have on parties or events planned by the customer.

The maximum unsupported overhang for Granite and Quartz is 10". All overhangs greater than 10" will require additional bracing or decorative Corbels. If requested, Hallmark Stone can supply steel braces at an additional charge. Corbels must be supplied and installed by a cabinet installer or contractor.

Small chips occur in most Granite and Quartz installations. One of the final steps in the installation process is to fill small chips. Epoxy combined with natural stone is used to fill these chips. If you find a chip after installation is complete, please mark it by placing a small piece of masking tape by the chip and call Hallmark Stone to schedule a follow-up.

Be Informed about the Height of Backsplash

Most customers who have a high-bar prefer that the backsplash height be equal to the distance from the countertop to the bottom of the bar. Some customers then decide that they would prefer that the backsplash for the

remainder of the countertop be equal to this height so that they don't have two backsplashes intersecting that are of different heights. Please indicate your preference to the templater.

Be a Little More Informed About Granite

The sample used to make your color selection will not be identical in color to the slab(s) used to produce your order. Also, samples of granite do not show the concentration of granite crystals, small pits or veins that are likely to be present in some sections of the slab(s) that will be used to produce your order. We recommend that you confirm your color by viewing full granite slabs prior to fabrication.

Granite is naturally porous and must be sealed in order to minimize staining. Sealing granite is no guarantee against staining. Granite countertops should be resealed every six months to minimize staining.

An option to avoid regular sealing, and create a lower maintenance countertop is to order your granite with SenSa. Unlike common sealers, SenSa offers a superior protective shield that chemically anchors to the stone's surface creating a permanent bond. To clean, simply use soapy water or a gentle household cleaner and wipe the surface dry. Windex or similar cleaners can be used. SenSa comes with a 15 year warranty against staining.

Granite is a product of nature and contains weak spots, hairline cracks and fissures. They become more noticeable if they separate. Additional cracks may appear after installation, particularly if settling in the home occurs that causes movement or stress on the countertop. We do not provide compensation should fissures open in your granite countertop due to settling of your home.

How do I seal my Granite? Sealers should be sprayed on your countertops and then the excess is wiped away with a paper towel. The whole process takes just minutes. Follow directions on the bottle of stone sealer. Stone sealer can be purchased at home improvement centers and tile shops. We recommend sealing your counter tops once or twice each year.

Can I set a hot pot directly on my countertops? Granite naturally can withstand high temperatures; however, it is possible to crack granite by

shocking the stone. Setting a hot pot on a piece of stone which is cold (from a bag of ice or an Air Conditioning vent) may cause a thermal shock that can crack your countertops. Stone absorbs heat very quickly and takes a long time to cool. Setting a 400-degree pot on stone will quickly heat the stone. When the pot is moved, the stone may be hot enough to burn someone for 15 minutes or longer. **We recommend you use a trivet or hot pad.**

Be a Little More Informed About Quartz

The sample used to make your color selection will not be identical in color to the slab(s) used to produce your order. Also, samples of Quartz do not show the concentration of Quartz crystals, color pooling, or small pits that are likely to be present in some sections of the slab(s) that will be used to produce your order. We will not provide compensation to you if your order varies in color from the sample used to make your selection or if your order contains concentrations of crystal or color pooling that were not present in your sample.

Quartz surfacing is composed of 93% natural Quartz and Silica. The production process is similar to baking cookies. The ingredients are mixed together and then pressed in a form and baked. With cookies, it is impossible to perfectly space the chocolate chips. With Silestone, it is impossible to perfectly place the different colored stones. Therefore from time to time, pooling of certain colors occurs.

Do I need to seal my Silestone Countertops? No - Silestone is maintenance free and does not need to be sealed.

Can I set a hot pot directly on my countertops? Silestone can withstand high temperatures; however, it is possible to crack Silestone by shocking the stone. Setting a hot pot on a piece of stone which is cold (from a bag of ice or an Air Conditioning vent) may cause a thermal shock that can crack your countertops. Stone absorbs heat very quickly and takes a long time to cool. Setting a 400-degree pot on stone will quickly heat the stone. When the pot is moved, the stone may be hot enough to burn someone for 15 minutes or longer. **We recommend you use a trivet or hot pad.**

Granite & Silestone Template and Installation Timeline

- _____ Tops purchased
- _____ Customer contacted by Hallmark Stone Company to schedule measure or template (if new cabinets have been installed)
- _____ Sinks & Appliances delivered to job site
- _____ Existing Countertops Removed (if necessary)
- _____ Templates Made (Decision making adult must be on-site)
- _____ Pricing confirmed with Designer
- _____ Installation Date Scheduled
- _____ Installation Date confirmed day before installation. Please make sure alternate phone numbers and the correct jobsite address are provided. The customer must verbally confirm that they are ready when called. Installation will be cancelled if Hallmark does not hear back from customer.
- _____ One day prior to installation remove all items from the sink and cooktop cabinet(s). Please remove breakables and plants which are hard to dust from the room and clear a path from the entrance to the work area.
- _____ Countertops installed. Undermount sinks mounted. 4-inch standard splash installed. Custom height splash and full height splash measurements taken.
- _____ Plumber can connect sink and water 24 hours after tops installed
- _____ Installation Date for splash set (2-3 business days after tops set)
- _____ Reminder for splash installation day before installation (Customer must verbally confirm that they are ready when called. Installation will be cancelled if Hallmark does not hear back from customer)
- _____ Splash installed.
- _____ Post Installation Follow-Up sent after completed installation.

Acknowledgement of Expectations

Key points to keep in mind throughout this process include the following:

- The customer must be on-site at the time of templating to review any radiused corners, review seam locations, overhangs and other issues that commonly arise.
- Because of the inherent characteristics of natural stone, no two pieces of granite, such as sections of a countertop, will be identical.
- Silestone contains crushed quartz and silica sand. Color pooling occurs to some degree on all slabs.
- New sinks, faucets and appliances (cooktops, slide in ranges, dishwashers) must be on-site at the time of templating.
- Cabinets must be fully and permanently installed including all finished panels at the time of templating.
- Undermount sink cutouts will be made to overhang the sink bowls by approximately ¼ inch.
- The customer should expect some dust to continue to settle for a few days after the installer has left.
- Most Granite and Quartz applications contain seams – which can be seen and felt. While we indicate the most likely location of your seams when your countertops are templated, we reserve the right to change the location of the seams while we are fabricating the tops.
- During transportation a top can and will sometimes break. Remakes will be completed in 2-3 days in most cases
- The maximum unsupported overhang for Granite and Quartz is 10". All overhangs greater than 10" will require additional bracing or decorative corbels.
- Small chips are present in all Granite and Quartz installations. The final step in the installation process is to fill small chips.

In making sure you are informed, we hope to ensure your satisfaction. You are buying the best countertops on the market. You will enjoy the beauty and durability of these countertops for many many years. Thank you for letting us bring the beauty of nature into your life.