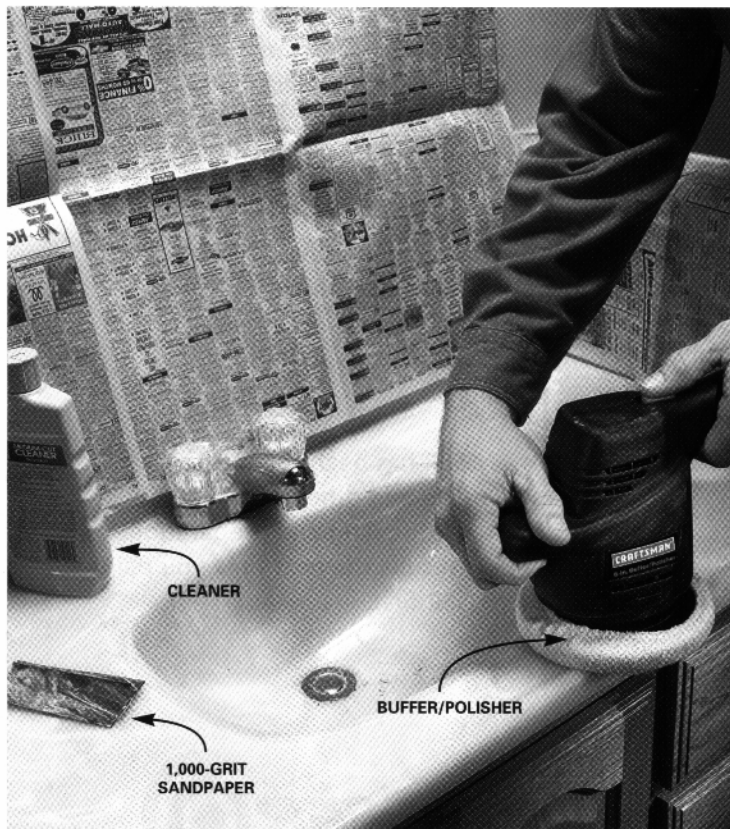
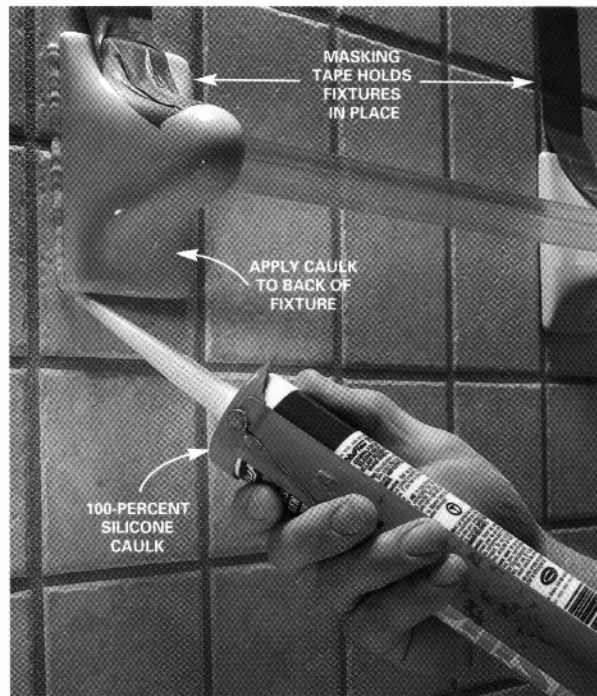


Mounting a towel bar on ceramic tile

Q I want to install a ceramic towel bar in my tiled shower. How do I cut out the existing tile to make a space for it?

A You don't have to. In the past, ceramic fixtures such as towel bar holders and soap dishes were cemented right to the wall and the tile was fitted around them. Now most are designed to be glued to the face of the tile with 100-percent silicone caulk. The only tricky part is holding them in place until the silicone sets up.

First, thoroughly clean the tile with denatured alcohol. Lay a bead of caulk on the back of the fixture, push it into place and secure it with masking tape. Put the rod in before setting the second fixture. Let the caulk stiffen for an hour or so and then add caulk around the perimeter. Use a wet finger or rag to smooth the caulk joint. Let it sit overnight before you pull the tape. And remember, towel bars and soap dishes are not designed to be grab bars.



Renew a scratched countertop

Q There's a cultured marble countertop in the bathroom of our new house and it's quite scratched up and shabby looking. Can I do anything to make it look like new?

A How about close to new? You can restore a cultured marble countertop with an auto polisher!

Cultured tops are made of polyester resin with a clear topcoat (called the gel coat). This is the same material that's used with fiberglass and it buffs out beautifully. Removing the faucet makes it easier to buff the top.

First wet-sand with 1,000-grit paper (available at auto parts stores) to remove small, shallow scratches and surface stains. Don't try to remove deep scratches or deep stains. You'll risk sanding right through the gel coat. Rinse and dry the top.

Next, buff with Meguiar's Medium-Cut Cleaner (also available at auto parts stores). The buffing can be done by hand, but a small power buffer is much easier. Finally, protect the restored finish with a coat of Hope's Cultured Marble Polish (available at The Home Depot and bath specialty stores). Follow the label directions. 