Natural stone *finishes*: eight surfaces compared

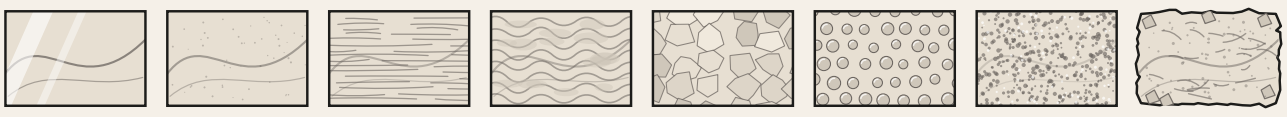
Polished is glossy, honed is matt, brushed and leathered are softly textured, and flamed, bush-hammered and sandblasted are rough and chosen for grip. Names vary between makers and the finish alone does not decide how slippery a floor is, so approve a sample of your own stone and test grip wet.

AT A GLANCE

Finish	How it is made	Look and feel	Grip and marks (indicative)	Where it is used
Polished	Ground with ever finer diamond abrasives, then buffed to a gloss	Mirror-like; brings out colour and veining	Smoothest. Scratches and etching show most. Grip can fall when wet or contaminated.	Interior floors, walls, worktops, table tops
Honed	Ground with diamond abrasives but not taken to a gloss	Smooth and matt; quiet to the eye	Hides etching and fine scratches better than polished. One guide calls it more porous than polished, so seal and test.	Floors, worktops, dining tops, wall cladding
Brushed	Abrasive brushes wear back the softer minerals	Slightly rippled, low sheen, aged feel	Texture hides marks and holds some dirt. Porosity claims differ between sources.	Floors, worktops, cladding
Leathered	Diamond brushes follow the stone's natural undulations, usually over a honed face	Soft, tactile, low sheen	Hides water spots and fingermarks. Texture holds some dirt.	Kitchen worktops, bathrooms, floors
Flamed	A high-temperature flame makes surface crystals flake off	Rough, bumpy, matt	Chosen for grip, mainly outdoors. Harder to clean.	External paving, steps, thresholds
Bush-hammered	Struck with a multi-pointed hammer	Pitted and coarse	Strong texture. Hard to keep clean.	External floors and walls, feature walls
Sandblasted	Blasted with sand (one guide: sand and water under pressure)	Fine pitted matt; no gloss	Fine texture; grip depends on the stone, so test.	Cladding, external surfaces
Antiqued	Tumbled, brushed or sanded to soften edges and wear the surface; names vary	Worn, soft-edged, aged	Varies with how it is done. Test grip and stain on a sample.	Floors, hearths, period schemes

Descriptions are indicative: names and processes vary between makers. No gloss or slip values are given because none could be sourced; ask the stone workshop for gloss readings and pendulum results on your own sample.

THE EIGHT FINISHES



Polished — Mirror gloss
Honed — Smooth, matt
Brushed — Fine brush lines
Leathered — Soft, tactile
Flamed — Rough, chipped
Bush-hammered — Pitted, coarse
Sandblasted — Fine pitted matt
Antiqued — Worn, aged

Schematic swatches, not photographs: colour, veining and texture on a real slab will differ. Original drawing by Make Bespoke Studio.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

FINISH

Finish: [honed] on [stone name, quarry reference], to all exposed faces [and visible edges and cut-outs], to match approved sample [ref] cut from the production slab. Gloss reading [ ] GU on sample [ref], instrument and measuring geometry stated by the stone workshop. Finish applied after book-matching marks are set.

SLIP

Floor surface to be tested on a sample from the approved slab, wet, to BS 7976 (pendulum), [Slider 96 / Slider 55 for barefoot areas]. Target pendulum test value [36] or more. Test report to be issued before fabrication; a failing result is to be resolved with a different finish or stone before work starts.

APPROVED SAMPLE

Approved sample [300 x 300 x [20]] mm, finished and sealed as the works will be, signed and dated, retained on site as the reference for the finish, colour and veining. Cleaning and sealing products to be those recommended by the stone workshop and the sealer maker.

TERMS USED

Honed

A smooth, matt stone surface produced by grinding without taking it to a gloss polish.

Leathered

A softly textured, low-sheen finish created by diamond brushes that follow the stone's natural undulations.

Flamed

A rough finish made by playing a high-temperature flame over crystalline stone so that the surface crystals flake off. Usually chosen where grip matters, and usually described as suiting hard crystalline stones such as granite; sources disagree about other stones.

Bush-hammered

A coarse, pitted finish made by striking the stone with a multi-pointed hammer, by hand or machine. The strong texture is usually chosen where grip matters and is harder to keep clean.

Etching

Dulling of a polished calcium-based stone (such as marble) where acids dissolve the surface, which a sealer does not prevent.

Pendulum test value (PTV)

The result of a swinging-rubber-foot test (BS 7976) used to rate how slippery a floor is; UKSRG bands are 0-24 high, 25-35 moderate and 36 or more low slip potential.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- HSE, Assessing the slip resistance of flooring (technical information sheet): tables 1 and 2 (PTV and Rz bands, from UKSRG 2011). Read 5 Nov 2026; web page updated 5 Jun 2023.
- BS 7976-1, -2 and -3: pendulum test, as cited by HSE. Named; not read.
- BS EN 14231: natural stone: slip resistance by the pendulum tester. Named; not read.
- BS EN 12670: natural stone terminology. Named; not read.
- Building and Construction Authority (Singapore), Natural Stone Finishes (Enhancement Series, 2018): finish descriptions and the slip-resistance statement quoted above. Read 5 Nov 2026.
- Stone Federation Great Britain, Natural stone in your home: list of nine finishes and cleaning advice. Page undated; read 5 Nov 2026.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/natural-stone-finishes. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.