Ten common *stone specification* mistakes, and the wording that prevents them

Ten common gaps in natural stone specifications, what each causes, and the wording that closes it. General guidance: no tolerance or strength figure is quoted.

Compliance guidance. General guidance on writing a stone specification, not a design check. No tolerance, thickness or strength figure is quoted: the product standards were not read, only catalogue listings and a Stone Federation guide. The right stone, thickness, base and joints for a project are for the designer, the stone supplier and the stone-fixing specialist. Confirm the current edition of every standard named. This is guidance, not engineering or legal advice.

AT A GLANCE

Mistake	What goes wrong	Wording that prevents it
1. Trade name only	Any similar stone can be priced and supplied.	Petrographic name (BS EN 12407), denomination (BS EN 12440), origin and a sample reference.
2. No range panel	Argument over veining, fills and colour at delivery.	Range panels agreed in advance as the control samples.
3. Finish not defined	‘Polished’ or ‘honed’ differs from tenderer to tenderer.	Finish to the approved sample, with the grit stated and the sample reference.
4. Size without thickness	Thickness chosen to the price, not the stone.	Size, thickness and tolerance on the drawing; workshop confirms in writing.
5. No test data asked for	No evidence the stone suits the use.	Declared strength, density, slip and abrasion before order.
6. Slip not stated	A wet floor that is slippery in use.	Pendulum test on the finished surface, wet, with the slider named.
7. Acid and stain exposure ignored	Etching and staining in a bar, kitchen or spa.	State the exposure. Match stone, finish and sealer to it.
8. Heating and base ignored	Cracking, hollow stone, delay.	State heating, base and bed. Base accepted in writing before laying.
9. Movement joints not set out	Cracked stone, lifting edges.	Joints on an approved layout drawing, in the same position as the base joints.
10. Protection and care not specified	Damage from following trades. No care regime.	Protection to handover. Sealer and cleaner named. Care document at handover.

Read 7 Nov 2026: Stone Federation GB guide SS 01 (2010) and BSI listings. The standards were not read, so no tolerance or strength figure is given. Practice points are in the unverified list.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

STONE AND FINISH

Natural stone [floor slabs to BS EN 12058 / modular tiles to BS EN 12057, confirm current edition]. Petrographic name to BS EN 12407: [ ]. Denomination to BS EN 12440: [ ], quarry or mine [ ], country [ ]. Reference sample [no.]. Finish [honed] to approved sample [no.], grit [ ]. Range panels [ref] are the control samples for the whole run; fills, if any, are declared and shown on them.

SIZE, THICKNESS AND EVIDENCE

Face size [ ] x [ ] mm, thickness [ ] mm, tolerances as the product standard [confirm current edition], to drawing [ref]. The stone workshop confirms in writing that the thickness suits the stone, format, base and use. Before order the supplier provides the declaration of performance and test results for flexural strength (BS EN 13161), apparent density (BS EN 1936) [and abrasion (BS EN 14157)].

SLIP RESISTANCE

Slip resistance measured by the pendulum test on the finished surface, wet, with [Slider 55 or 96], to [BS EN 16165 Annex C / BS EN 14231, confirm current edition]. The designer states the value required: [ ]. The report is supplied before order, and again from a sample of the finished floor.

EXPOSURE, BASE, JOINTS AND CARE

Exposure: [bar / kitchen / spa / entrance] with [acids, oils, salts]. Sealer: [type, for purpose X] by the stone fixer; cleaner [pH-neutral]. Base [screed] [ ] mm, accepted in writing as flat, dry and cured before laying; heating commissioned and tested before laying. Installation to BS 5385-3:2024 [confirm current edition]. Movement joints as stone layout drawing [ref], approved before fabrication. Floor protected with [board] until handover. Care document at handover.

TERMS USED

Range panel (control sample)

A set of large stones chosen at the quarry or mine to show the typical natural variation in the stone. Agreed in advance, it is the reference against which the delivered stone is compared.

Petrographic name

The scientific name of a stone's rock type (for example a limestone or a marble), set by examination. A trade name is not a substitute.

Denomination

The way a stone is named under BS EN 12440: traditional name, petrological family, typical colour and place of origin.

Pendulum test value (PTV)

The reading from a pendulum slip tester. A lower number means a more slippery surface. It must be quoted with the slider and whether the surface was wet.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- Stone Federation GB, Selecting the Correct Stone (SS 01): April 2010, footers Feb 2011. Read 7 Nov 2026.
- BS EN 14231:2003: BSI listing seen 7 Nov 2026: Current, under review. Text not read.
- BS EN 12058:2015, 12057:2015, 12407:2019, 12440:2017: current per the library notes of 5 Nov 2026. Texts not read.
- BS 5385-3:2024: current; replaces BS 5385-5:2009, withdrawn 30 May 2024 (library notes). Text not read.
- BS EN 13161, 14157, 1936; BS EN 16165:2021: 13161:2008 and 14157:2017 seen only on retailer listings; 1936 not checked; 16165 per the slip sheet. Confirm.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/ten-common-stone-specification-mistakes. 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.