



**MARBLE  
INSTITUTE**

*of America*

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## **Industry Term Definitions & Common Uses**

**Granite** - Granite is an igneous rock, which means it was once molten and formed as it cooled deep within the earth. Minerals within granite typically appear as small flecks throughout the stone, once creating a “salt and pepper” look. Other types have veining similar to marble. Granite is a densegrained, hard stone. It can be highly polished or finished in a variety of other ways. A broad spectrum of color is available.

### **Most common uses:**

Interior and exterior wall cladding, interior and exterior paving, residential & commercial counter tops, monuments, curbing, statuary, balance tables, novelty items

**Marble**- Marble has both a scientific and commercial definition. Scientific marble was once limestone that achieved metamorphosis from intense pressures and high temperatures within the earth. This altered its crystalline structure and introduced other minerals that produced the valuable colors and veining. Commercially, any stone capable of taking a polish (with the exception of granite) is known as marble. This includes travertine, onyx, serpentine and limestone.

### **Most common uses:**

Interior and exterior wall cladding, Interior and exterior paving, Fireplace facing and hearth, Lavatory tops, Residential & Commercial counter tops, Table Tops, Statuary, Novelty items, Many non-architectural uses, such as tooth paste, paint whitening, agricultural lime, etc.

**Travertine** - Travertine marble is a variety of limestone formed in pools by the slow precipitation of hot, mineral-rich spring water. The “holes” characteristic of travertine were created when carbon dioxide bubbles were trapped as the stone was being formed. Although the classic travertines are recognizable by their homogenous ecru to dark colors, dark reds are available to dark brown veining.

### **Most common uses:**

Interior and exterior wall cladding, interior and exterior paving, statuary, curbing

**Limestone** - limestone is widely used as a building stone because it is readily available and easy to work with. It is a sedimentary stone, layered and formed from the skeletons and shells of sea creatures that lived in vast, warm seas millions of years ago. Much domestic limestone is gray to buff in color, while some pastel shades of yellow to pink are available. Imported limestones are available in colors ranging from light beige to dark brown, red and black. When the mineral dolomite is present, it makes the limestone harder and capable of being polished in the same manner as metamorphic marble.

***Most common uses:***

Interior and exterior wall cladding, interior and exterior paving, limited counter top use

**Quartz-Based** - Quartz-Based stones vary widely in color because of different materials and clays contained within the stone. These stones can be found in varying hues of light gray, yellow, green and red. (The dark, reddish-brown “brownstone” was widely used in building construction in the northeastern United States and Canada in the early 1900s.) They may be either sedimentary in formation (such as the sandstones, bluestones and brownstones) or metamorphic (as in quartzite that is formed in exceedingly hard layers).

***Most common uses:***

Interior and exterior wall cladding, interior and exterior paving

**Slate** - Slate is a fine-grained, metamorphic stone derived from sedimentary rock shale. It is uniform in color, available in shades such as dark to light green, mottled purple, black, gray or dark red. Veined patterns from overseas have also recently been introduced. Unless its surface has been honed smooth, slate can be recognized by its distinct cleft pattern.

***Most common uses:***

Residential and commercial counter tops, fireplace facing, roofing, interior & exterior (American only) wall cladding, interior & exterior (American only) paving, fireplace facings, table tops and many non-architectural uses

**Soapstone** - Soapstone is a metamorphosed, easily worked igneous stone characterized by a “soapy” feeling when touched. Colors range from dark gray to bluish or greenish gray. Its heat retention qualities make it an ideal cladding for free-standing coal or wood-fired room heaters. Soapstone is also chemical, stain and weather-resistant, and is useful for sinks and laboratory tops as well as general building purposes.

***Most common uses:***

Chemistry and fire resistant work surfaces, fireplace facings & inner hearths, where heat is an issue

**Onyx** - Onyx marble is a translucent, layered calcitic stone in pastel shades. It is typically formed in caves as stalactites and stalagmites by the slow precipitation of cold, mineral-rich water.

***Most common uses:***

Interior wall covering. Can be used on the exterior in warm environments, table tops, very light duty residential flooring, Novelty items

***Stone Identification***

Natural stone is classified into two general categories: siliceous stone and calcareous stone.

***Siliceous Stones*** - Siliceous stones are granite, quartz-based stone, serpentine, slate and soapstone. They are durable and easy to maintain under normal conditions of use.

***Calcareous Stones*** - Calcareous stones are limestones, marble, onyx and travertine. Neutral cleansers (ph7) are recommended. These stones are also durable, but more sensitive to acids and strong alkaline compounds.