



Marble, Granite & Masonry

# StoneOne

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## Soapstone

Soapstone is the common name for the mineral steatite. Steatite is at least 50% talc combined with other minerals, mostly magnesite, that have been geologically metamorphosed into stone through a combination of heat, pressure and time. It is called soapstone because the talc gives the stone a soapy feel.

### Are there different kinds of soapstone?

Yes, soapstone is found in basically two varieties depending on the talc content.

Artistic soapstone has high talc content, is very soft, and is used for carving and welders pencils. The fat little Inuit whales and polar bears common in gift shops are carved from soapstone.

Architectural soapstone is between 60 and 75 % talc and is used for sinks, countertops, floors and other architectural elements.

### Can soapstone harbor bacteria?

No. Because soapstone is dense and completely nonporous it is impervious to bacteria.

### Will soapstone stain?

Soapstone is non porous so nothing penetrates the surface. When any liquid is spilled or applied to the surface the stone darkens because the light is refracted off the stone. The stone will lighten when the substance is removed from the surface either by evaporation or cleaning.

### Will soapstone etch?

Soapstone is chemically neutral so acids like lemon or tomato juice do not affect it nor do alkalis found in some household cleaners.

### Does soapstone scratch easily?

Yes, it scratches more easily than other natural stone but it repairs more easily as well. Apply some oil or wax to the scratch or give it a light sanding with sandpaper or steel wool if the scratch is deeper.

### Does soapstone need to be sealed?

Soapstone does not need to be sealed.

### Why is it recommended to apply mineral oil to soapstone?

To avoid inconsistent color or tone. (Appearance) Soapstone oxidizes (turns dark) when it is exposed to water, grease, and oils. Treating your soapstone with mineral oil will keep the oxidation uniform across the entire surface. Mineral oil will also bring out the richness of your stone's natural color, making the color deeper and more dramatic.

### How often do I need to apply mineral oil?

We recommend weekly for the first two or three months and then monthly, or less, depending on use. The thin layer of oil, too light to feel, will keep the stone a consistent shade of dark gray. The oil does evaporate so the stone will lighten with time.

### Where is soapstone found?

Soapstone is found throughout the world in relatively small deposits ranging from small rocks to seams, boulders and other deposits. Soapstone is found in the Appalachian range from Maine to Georgia with significant deposits in Vermont and Virginia. Finland and Brazil are the largest international producers of soapstone.

### Does Soapstone vary?

The stone varies in appearance, hardness and purity from deposit to deposit.

### Does the softness of soapstone effect wear?

Soapstone will wear, softening the edges and accumulate some nicks, scratches and dents over time. The scratches can be removed with light sanding if desired.

### Are there disadvantages of using soapstone?

- a. Soapstone has limited color range.
- b. It will darken with age.
- c. Soapstone requires some maintenance such as periodic oiling to maintain a consistent appearance.
- d. Soapstone scratches easily.

Some uses for soapstone:

Countertops, sinks, cooking slabs, boiling stones, fireplace liners, hearths, and woodstoves.