

LARGE FORMAT

Porcemall's most common size is 24 by 48 inches. A tile that big is not laid the way a 12 by 12 is laid. This guide covers what counts as large format, why lippage is the risk that governs everything else, and what changes in the floor below, in the pattern and in the setting.

ON THIS PAGE

What counts as large format

Lippage is the risk

The floor under it

Why a third and not a half

What changes at setting

The rest of the floor

Common questions

WHAT COUNTS AS LARGE FORMAT

Large format is a size, not a grade. The line is any tile with one edge of 15 inches or more, where the installation standard ANSI A108.02 starts asking for a flatter floor underneath. Porcemall's 24 by 48 is past it, and so are 48 by 48 and a 9 by 60 plank.

One piece covers close to eight square feet, and that is why it behaves differently. A small tile floor has a joint every few inches, and each joint absorbs a little of whatever the base is doing. A large floor has far fewer of them. The body is no weaker. The piece is simply long enough now to bridge a low spot instead of following it.

LIPPAGE IS THE RISK

Lippage is the height difference between the edges of two tiles that sit next to each other. You see it as a shadow line along a joint and catch it with a bare foot. ANSI A108.02 sets the allowance as a fixed figure plus whatever warpage the tile is permitted under ANSI A137.1. Joint width decides the figure.

ALLOWABLE LIPPAGE UNDER ANSI A108.02

JOINT WIDTH	ALLOWABLE LIPPAGE
1/16 in up to under 1/4 in	1/32 in plus tile warpage
1/4 in and wider	1/16 in plus tile warpage

A narrow joint buys less room, not more. Rectified tile, listed under Edge on every product page, is ground to size after firing, so its edges are straight and it takes that narrow joint. It is why a rectified floor reads as one surface, and why no margin is left. A wide joint gives the eye a band between two tiles; a narrow one hands it a continuous plane, where any step shows. Joint width is in grout and trim.

THE FLOOR UNDER IT

Lippage is mostly decided before a tile leaves the box. ANSI A108.02 sets how flat the substrate has to be, and the tolerance tightens as the tile gets longer.

SUBSTRATE FLATNESS UNDER ANSI A108.02

TILE SIZE	MAXIMUM VARIATION
All edges under 15 in	1/4 in in 10 ft, 1/16 in in 1 ft
Any edge 15 in or more	1/8 in in 10 ft, 1/16 in in 2 ft

The allowance across ten feet is halved for the format Porcelain sells most. A 24 by 48 tile spans close to four feet on its own, so whatever the floor does across that run the tile has to

do too. If it cannot, an edge lifts.

Getting a slab there is patching and self levelling compound, before setting day. Mortar cannot fix it. Extra thinset under a low spot leaves a soft bed that shrinks as it cures and lets the tile settle back down.

WHY A THIRD AND NOT A HALF

A long tile is not perfectly flat, and it is not meant to be. It leaves the kiln with a slight bow along its length, usually crowned, so the middle sits a little higher than the ends. On a 60 inch plank that bow is within tolerance and unavoidable.

Lay two of those planks at a half offset. The middle of one tile, its highest point, arrives beside the end of its neighbour, the lowest point. The pattern has put the two extremes of the bow against each other, and the difference is lippage, along the line the eye already follows. At a third or less, the point meeting that end sits nearer its own end, where the bow has flattened out.

The TCNA Handbook makes it a recommendation: for tile with any side over 15 inches, keep a running bond offset to no more than one third, and consult the manufacturer before going further. Customers ask for a half offset because that is how a wood floor is laid. A wood plank flexes under a nail or a click joint. A porcelain plank does not.

WHAT CHANGES AT SETTING

Four things an installer does differently here. None is exotic. All are slower.

BACK BUTTERING

A thin flat coat of mortar goes on the back of the tile as well as the floor. It fills the ribs on the tile back and closes the gaps between trowel ridges, which is how **full coverage** is reached at this size.

COVERAGE ANSI A108.5 asks for **80 percent** mortar contact in dry interior areas and **95 percent** in wet areas and outdoors, corners and edges supported in every case. An unsupported corner is a hollow sound underfoot and the place it breaks. See breaking strength.

THE TROWEL A bigger notch carries more mortar, so a half inch square notch or larger is normal here. The installer combs the ridges in **one direction** and sets the tile across them, so they collapse sideways and push the air out.

LEVELLING CLIPS A clip slides under two tiles and a wedge tightens on top, pulling both faces flush while the mortar sets. Clips **hold a flat floor flat**. Over a low spot they pull one tile down and open a void under the other.

Flat base first, pattern second, technique third. An installer fighting lippage with clips lost that argument at the start of the day. The stages are in installation basics.

THE REST OF THE FLOOR

Joints. How wide the joint is, and why a rectified edge takes a narrow one.	Stages. The six stages of an installation, in order, and how long each takes.
Strength. What the newtons mean under ISO 10545-4, and why a void matters more.	Quantity. Square feet to boxes, using the coverage printed on each product page, and how much overage to add.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Is lippage the installer's fault?

Check in order. The base first, because a floor outside the flatness tolerance produces lippage no matter who sets the tile. Then the pattern, because a half offset on a long plank produces it by design. Then the setting.

Can I lay a 9 by 60 plank in a half offset?

The recommendation is a third or less, because at a half offset the bow puts a tile's high middle against its neighbour's low end. If the customer insists, ask your advisor about that series and set the expectation before the boxes are opened.

Do levelling clips guarantee a flat floor?

No. They pull two tile faces flush with each other, which is a different thing. On a base that is not flat they level the faces by forcing a tile out of the mortar bed, which leaves a void. They finish a floor; they do not prepare one.

Does large format need a wider joint?

Not wider because it is large. Rectified tile takes a narrow joint at any size. But the joint has to hold real grout and give the installer somewhere to lose the small differences between pieces. The tighter it gets, the more any step shows.

Is a big tile more likely to crack?

Not because of its size. It cracks for the reasons any tile cracks: a void under it, a subfloor that flexes, a point load on an unsupported spot. Its size only makes all three easier to create and harder to see.

CHECK THE FORMAT BEFORE THE FLOOR

Every PORCEMALL product page lists its sizes and its edge, rectified or pressed, next to the performance table. Open a product page and read the format the way this guide reads it.

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