

HALLMARK STONE

Bringing nature's beauty into your life.

Meet Your New Countertops!

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Thank you for purchasing one of the most beautiful and durable countertops on the market. We are excited to work with you on this project!

We have created this booklet to ensure that you understand both the features & benefits of Granite and Quartz, as well as become more familiar with the template and installation process. Our goal is to make sure you are well informed so this process goes smoothly for you.

Whichever product you choose, it is our goal to ensure that you love your new countertops and enjoy their beauty for years to come.

What is Natural Granite?

Granite is a natural stone, formed when molten rock from the center of the earth's core was pushed to the surface. The beauty, which only nature provides, is inherent in every piece of granite making it truly a designer's choice. Its extreme hardness, which approaches that of diamonds, makes granite uncommonly durable and extremely appealing for use every day in the home. From ancient cathedrals to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, granite's beauty endures forever. You may select from Hallmark Stone's selection of fine stone or may make special arrangements to hand select slabs from a local Hallmark Stone Supplier. To book an appointment to view our stock material, please go to www.hallmarkstone.com/showroom-booking.

The sample used to make your color selection will not be identical in color to the slab(s) used to produce your order. Also, samples of granite do not show the concentration of granite crystals, small pits or veins that are likely to be present in some sections of the slab(s) that will be used to produce your order. We recommend that you confirm your color by viewing full granite slabs prior to fabrication, either in person or through digital photos.

Granite is a product of nature and contains weak spots, hairline cracks and fissures, and they become more noticeable if they separate. Additional fissures may appear after installation, particularly if settling in the home occurs that causes movement or stress on the countertop. We do not provide compensation should fissures open in your granite countertop due to settling of your home.

Can I set a hot pot directly on my countertops? Granite naturally can withstand high temperatures; however, it is possible to crack granite by

shocking the stone. Setting a hot pot on a piece of stone which is cold (from a bag of ice or an Air Conditioning vent) may cause a thermal shock that can crack your countertops. Stone absorbs heat very quickly and takes a long time to cool. Setting a 400-degree pot on stone will quickly heat the stone. When the pot is moved, the stone may be hot enough to burn someone 15 or more minutes later. We recommend you use a trivet or hot pad.

Can I cut directly on my countertop? While Granite countertops are scratch resistant, they are not scratch proof. Granite is above stainless steel on the Measure of Hardness scale, which means that stainless steel shouldn't be able to scratch it. It bears mentioning that due to the hardness of granite, it will most likely dull your knives. We recommend using a cutting board to keep your tops looking great for many years.

How do I clean my new Granite Countertops? To clean, simply use soapy water or a gentle household cleaner and wipe the surface dry. Windex or similar cleaners can be used.

Will my countertops stain? Do I need to seal them? Granite is naturally porous and must be sealed in order to minimize staining. Sealing granite is no guarantee against staining. Granite countertops should be resealed every six to twelve months with a topical sealer to minimize staining. The countertops will be installed with sealant applied.

An option to avoid regular sealing, and create a lower maintenance countertop is to order your granite with a PermaSealer. Unlike common topical sealers, a PermaSealer offers a superior protective shield that chemically anchors to the stone's surface creating a permanent bond. The sealer impregnates the stone, going deep into the pores, not just resting on the surface. A PermaSealer comes with a 15 year warranty against staining. The PermaSealer does not need to be reapplied like a topical sealer.

Sealers should be sprayed on your countertops and then the excess is wiped away with a paper towel. The whole process takes just minutes. Follow directions on the bottle of stone sealer. Stone sealer can be purchased at home improvement centers and tile shops, and we recommend sealing your counter tops once or twice each year.

Can I use Granite outdoors? Granite is a great material to use for outdoor kitchens, BBQ areas, and fireplace surrounds. This natural product will only enhance the look of your outdoor space. Just as in another installation process you must have all sinks, faucets, grills, green

eggs or cooktops on site for us to view at the template. With any outdoor project, weather is always a factor with the template and the install process. Hallmark Stone will work with you on finding the best date for the template and install process that will also fall into the correct weather condition. Please be patient with us on this process as we can't control the weather.

What is Quartz?

Quartz surfacing is composed of natural materials, 93% of which are the finest quartz and granite aggregates. This natural stone product has taken the best of what nature has to offer in terms of the durability and the beauty of stone. Through extensive engineering, a manufacturing process was developed utilizing intense pressure and heat to increase the color consistency, stain resistance and strength of this natural stone product. Being non-porous, Quartz does not require the use of sealants, and it withstands typical wear and tear beautifully. Professionally developed colors are computer-calibrated to maintain consistency, allowing designers and customers to make the perfect selection from samples. Certain colors of quartz have a larger, more random and natural veining or patterns. These colors may require a digital slab layout to ensure consistency of vein direction around corners and at seams.

The sample used to make your color selection will not be identical in color to the slab(s) used to produce your order. Also, samples of Quartz do not always show the concentration of Quartz crystals, color pooling, or small pits that are likely to be present in some sections of the slab(s) that will be used to produce your order. We will not provide compensation to you if your order varies in color from the sample used to make your selection or if your order contains concentrations of crystal or color pooling that were not present in your sample.

Quartz surfacing is composed of 93% natural Quartz. The production process is similar to baking cookies. The ingredients are mixed together and then pressed in a form and baked. With cookies, it is impossible to perfectly space the chocolate chips. With Quartz, it is impossible to perfectly place the different colored stones. Therefore from time to time, pooling of certain colors occurs.

Can I set a hot pot directly on my countertops? Quartz can withstand high temperatures; however, it is possible to crack Quartz by shocking the stone. Setting a hot pot on a piece of stone which is cold (from a bag of ice or an Air Conditioning vent) may cause a thermal shock that can crack

your countertops. Stone absorbs heat very quickly and takes a long time to cool. Setting a 400-degree pot on stone will quickly heat the stone. When the pot is moved, the stone may be hot enough to burn someone 15 or more minutes later. We recommend you use a trivet or hot pad.

Can I cut directly on my countertop? While Quartz countertops are scratch resistant, they are not scratch proof. Quartz is above stainless steel on the Measure of Hardness scale, which means that stainless steel shouldn't be able to scratch it. It bears mentioning that due to the hardness of Quartz, it will most likely dull your knives. We recommend using a cutting board to keep your tops looking great for many years.

How do I clean my new Quartz Countertops? To clean, simply use soapy water or a gentle household cleaner and wipe the surface dry. Windex or similar cleaners can be used.

Will my countertops stain? Do I need to seal them? No, Quartz countertops never need to be sealed because it is non-porous and therefore stain resistant.

Can I use Quartz outdoors? We do not recommend Quartz for outdoor use.

Everything and the Kitchen Sink!

One of the many benefits of stone countertops is the versatility in sink options. You can choose the sink that fits best for your style and function.

Undermount sinks are the most common choice with stone countertops. Undermount sinks are installed from the bottom of the countertop, giving a cleaner line to the sink installation. They also allow for easier countertop cleanup as dirt and debris will not get stuck on the sink edge. Undermount sink cutouts will be made to overhang the sink bowls by approximately 1/8 - 1/4 inch. The overhang over the bowls will vary slightly as each sink varies slightly from the master template used by Hallmark Stone to cut sink cutouts. No reveal will be shown on the sink despite sink manufacturer's recommendations. Customers generally do not want to display the lip of the sink, as it tends to collect crumbs and other debris swept off the countertops. A reveal can be requested at template, however; it must be confirmed in writing by Hallmark Stone Company and additional fees will apply. We will not cut the hole for the sink flush to the sink itself.

Overmount sinks are installed from the top side of the countertop, showing the edge of the sink. *Apron front or farm sinks* require a custom cabinet and need to be installed prior to template. *Vessel* sinks are an option in bathrooms, and these sinks look more like a bowl sitting on the countertop.

There are sinks available that can be installed either as an overmount or undermount style. They are called *Dual Mount*. However, we will only install these sinks as overmount as gaps can occur when a dual mount sink is used in the undermount fashion. If you want an undermount look, please make sure to buy an undermount sink.

We do not recommend reusing any fixtures for your new countertop project. Damage can occur during removal, and that damage is not always seen until the fixture is reinstalled. If you wish to reuse your existing sink or faucet, Hallmark Stone will not be able to remove them. You will be responsible for their removal and safekeeping until time of template. Also, Hallmark Stone will need to take the sink or faucet back to our shop for fabrication, so you will not be able to use it during that time. Hallmark Stone recommends purchasing new fixtures with your new countertops.

Please keep your new sink's original packaging. We may need to bring your sink back to our shop and the packaging will keep it protected. Also, the box contains information we might need at template.

What about the Backsplash?

If you choose to get splash out of the same material as your countertops, the standard height is 4 inches. You can also choose not to have splash, have splash that goes all the way up to the bottom of the upper cabinets (full height splash), or anything in between. Backsplash will be the same thickness as the countertop material.

In any case where the splash is going up to the bottom of something: upper cabinets, higher countertop, existing tile or paint, we will measure for the splash after the countertops are installed. This will allow us to get a better fit between the new countertop below, and the fixed upper line. We will return within a few days to install the splash at that time. Otherwise, for standard height splash, we will install that the same day as the countertop installation.

Will there be Seams in my countertop?

Most Granite and Quartz applications contain seams. **Granite and Quartz seams can be seen and felt.** While we will indicate the most likely location of your seams when your countertops are templated, we reserve the right to change the location of the seams while we are fabricating the tops. We do our best to include the customer's preference, however several factors play a role in seam location. In some cases, the elimination of a seam may result in a change in the price. Seams must be over supports or cabinets, they cannot be too close to an appliance or other unsupported area. Stone with a definite veining direction may require additional seams to ensure vein direction on all pieces is consistent. In addition, physical access issues such as stairs and doorways may require pieces to be made smaller. An order cannot be cancelled due to changes in seam location. We will notify the customer if a seam change or addition is required.

Installers will attempt to make the seams as tight as possible. The acceptable industry standard for seams is up to 1/8" wide and 1/32" rise for every 12" of seam. Natural stone (Quartz and Granite) does not flex and is not perfectly flat, stone shrinks and swells over time, and slabs vary in thickness so it is not possible to always have a perfectly flat seam.

Will my island have a seam? If you are building a large island, please be mindful of the size of the slab for the color you have chosen. We do not prefer to put a large seam through the middle of an island as it is very difficult to get that seam flat and tight. In some cases, we may encourage you to select a different color material that comes in a larger size.

Seams are wet for a few hours following installation. Please do not touch them until the day following installation.

Who is coming to my house?

Hallmark Stone works hard to protect you and your home. We use our own employees, we do not subcontract the template or install to another company. We background check and drug test all of our employees that will step foot on your property. Respect for your home is of utmost importance to us.

What is the Template Process?

Why do I need to be there when they are templating for my countertops?

It is important that the decision maker is on site for the template. Our crew will confirm all of the details of the job, including: color, edge, sink information, splash, radiused corners, seam locations, overhangs, and other questions, which commonly arise. Templates are the basis for fabricating your countertops and the tops will be made to match the templates. **Any changes to the tops requested after template will be done entirely at the customers' expense and may significantly delay installation.** Therefore, the person on-site at the time of templating is the final authority and has full responsibility for signing off on the templates. It is not a good idea to request a relative or neighbor to take on this responsibility.

Once your template is completed by our field staff we will require a signature on all documents saying you approve of the information gathered the day of template. All information gathered is final as the field staff will send your paperwork to the shop to prepare for fabrication. Even the smallest change can delay the job 2-3 days and incur additional charges.

What if I make a change at template, how much will it cost? If changes occur after the initial estimate, the customer should follow up with their designer to see if that change impacts the overall price. While our templaters may make recommendations, they will not discuss pricing with you.

When do I need to have my existing countertops removed?

In most cases, not until install! Our goal is to allow you to be functional as long as possible. In some cases, at template it may be necessary to cut off the backsplash of your existing countertop. This could chip or split the finish, making the tops unable to be reused. If you wish to reuse your tops, please inform the templater before template begins. No compensation will be given for damage to existing tops.

If your existing countertops are tile, we will need to have them fully removed, down to the cabinets, prior to template. Tile countertops are installed on a substrate, and we are unable to get accurate measurements for the new stone countertop with the existing tile countertop in place. That can either be removed by the customer, your contractor, or Hallmark Stone.

How much overhang can I have? The maximum unsupported overhang for Granite and Quartz is 10". All overhangs greater than 10" will require additional bracing or wood Corbels. If requested, Hallmark Stone can supply steel braces at an additional charge. Corbels must be supplied and installed by a cabinet installer or contractor.

If the customer elects to provide their own brackets, they need to be rated for several hundred pounds. No thinner than 3/8" thick steel, or solid wood corbels are recommended. Please have the brackets on site at template so our crew can review them with you and ensure they are sufficient. Decorative or shelf brackets are insufficient.

How do I know if I am ready for template? The following checklist should be used as your guide to prepare for templating:

- _____ New sinks in original packaging, faucets, & appliances (cooktops & slide in ranges) must be on-site at the time templates are made.
 - Specs are insufficient. If the appliance is not on site at time of template, we will have to return once the appliance is there, resulting in delays to the job and a trip charge.
 - If the new sink is an apron/farm sink, it must be installed in the cabinet prior to template.

- _____ Cabinets must be fully and permanently installed including all finish panels before templates can be made. No changes can be made to the cabinets after template. Cabinets should be installed level. If any panels are added after template or cabinets moved it will affect the fit and overhang of your custom tops.
 - In the case of tub decks: the surround must be permanently installed, have concrete board, and be waterproof.
 - For outdoor applications, the supporting structure must be finished and level.

- _____ Stone color and edge finalized.
 - Granite slabs approved, either in person or by photo.

If you answered yes to the above, congratulations, you are ready for template!

What can I expect at the template? Before the templater arrives, please remove all items from the countertops so he has clear access to the walls to get an accurate measurement. Please also remove any large or breakable items, as well as pets or small children, from the work area.

Templates typically take between 1-3 hours to complete. During that time, the templater will confirm color, edge, splash, supports, and other selections with you. He will review all seam locations. **All decisions made at this appointment will be final.** Any changes after the templater leaves your home will cause delays and additional charges.

What do I need to do after template? If any changes were made after your estimate (color, overhang, splash height, added sealer, supports, etc), there may be a price change that needs to be resolved with your dealer. Please check with your dealer, contractor or designer the day after template to verify any changes to your quote. Once all final paperwork has been received we will put your job into fabrication.

Some stone has movement and veining and will require us to do a digital slab layout. We generate a high resolution digital photo of your slab(s) and will use your custom template to create a virtual layout of what your countertops will look like installed. Not all stone will have a layout due to consistency of pattern or color. We recommend viewing this layout sent via email on a computer and not a tablet or phone. Once this layout has been approved we will proceed with fabrication.

Once all details have been confirmed, install is typically 7-10 business days later.

What should I expect when removing the old countertops?

Prior to removing your countertops, the sink, faucets, icemaker and your dishwasher will need to be disconnected. Most homes have shut-off valves under the sink. If your home does not have shut-off valves, you need to contact a plumber to have them installed. A countertop installation may take several hours and shut-off valves for the kitchen faucets must be in place to avoid having the water completely shut-off to your home for this period of time.

If Hallmark Stone is doing the tear out, all tops must be cleared off including small appliances and decorations. We suggest you remove all the top drawers and store in a safe location and the sink cabinet be cleaned out so this does not impede the sink installation.

Some unavoidable damage may be done to existing tile, backsplashes, drywall, wallpaper and paint during tear out and installation. This type of damage occurs with most installations and the customer should be prepared to make these touchups once the countertops are installed. Existing tile often comes dislodged when removing existing tops. The installer is not responsible for replacing dislodged or broken tiles.

Mirrors in bathrooms that are permanently affixed to the wall and resting on, or less than 1" above the top of the existing backsplash or countertops, must be removed by the customer or contractor before Hallmark Stone will tear-out. Any damage to mirrors not removed will be the responsibility of the homeowner.

Get Excited! Here is a section about the Installation of your Brand New Countertops!

What can I expect the day of the install? Our crews will call you when they are headed to your home, with a more accurate arrival time, so you are not waiting on us unnecessarily.

During installation, a substantial number of trips will be made from the outside work area to the install area. Please clear a path for the installer to use. Please remove all valuables from the area including children and pets.

The installation of granite countertops and splashes will require that the installer trim the countertops and splash at the installation site to ensure the best possible fit. This procedure is usually performed on the driveway or on the back porch, provided that it is not raining.

Sink cut-outs and cooktop cut-outs made in the field can be left for the customer only if the customer requests it directly from the installer making the cutout at the time of install. The pieces are not square, will be rough-cut, and no edges will be polished. The request must be done at the time of the installation. Absolutely no cutouts will be brought to the job site from openings made in the shop. The price for these cutouts is not included in your job. These cutouts come out in small and very sharp irregular pieces that are recycled using our gravel crusher.

Cooktop cutouts and drop-in sink cutouts are made on site because the front and back rail of the sink and cooktop are too thin to allow the tops to be transported without breaking. Standard industry practice is to cut the

openings once the tops are secured in place. A vacuum will be held as the cutting is done to catch as much dust as possible.

While the installers' service includes clean up (broom swept) and the use of a vacuum whenever cutting or drilling is taking place inside the home, the customer should expect some dust to continue to settle after the installer has cleaned up and left. Please be prepared to wipe dust for a few days after the installer leaves. To minimize dust in other parts of the home, some customers choose to put up a partition (a sheet is often used) between the rooms undergoing work and adjoining rooms.

Please do not touch the seams, put appliances on your tops or clean your tops for at least 24 hours as the glue will still be wet and your tops could move. We also recommend covering your tops should you have other trades doing work in your home.

When can I connect my appliances? Scheduling for the connection of cooktops and plumbing should be done the day after installation of countertops to prevent tops from shifting while the silicone adhesive is drying. Dishwashers cannot be reconnected until the plumbing is reconnected. Please turn off the automatic ice maker to your fridge. We recommend not turning on the dishwasher or ice maker until your plumbing installation is complete. If you would like us to coordinate the plumbing reconnect for you, please call the office and we will be happy to assist you.

Your new sink will be attached to the stone. We recommend waiting at least 24 hours to ensure the proper seal between your sink and the stone before hooking up the disposal, ice maker and dishwasher. Dishwasher brackets are available please let our crew know you need one.

What will be done if my cabinets are not level? Our crews will check the cabinets for levelness before they carry in the countertops. Because stone countertops do not flex, level cabinets are essential for a proper installation. If your cabinets are out of level $\frac{1}{8}$ " – $\frac{1}{4}$ ", shimming will be required. This is completely normal and just about every job requires a shim somewhere.

If your cabinets are out of level $\frac{1}{4}$ " – $\frac{1}{2}$ ", the countertops can be shimmed but the gap will have to be caulked or covered with wood trim by the homeowner. The homeowner can request the installer to caulk this gap but additional fees will apply. Note: to caulk properly, masking tape must be applied to cabinet faces. **No responsibility will be taken for**

damage to the finish of cabinets caused by removing painters' grade masking tape. If the cabinets are more than 1/2" out of level, your install may have to be postponed to a future date after your carpenter is able to level the cabinets.

Are my cabinets structurally sound to handle the weight of stone? Most cabinets are able to easily handle to weight of natural stone countertops; however, it is often not possible to assess cabinet problems when the templates are made. Installers may be able to reinforce cabinetry; however, additional fees will apply. If significant bracing and cabinet reinforcement is required, the installers will need to put our installation on hold until the homeowner can have the cabinets corrected. Countertop orders cannot be cancelled at this point.

What if the countertop breaks? During transportation and/or installation a top can sometimes break. Should a countertop or backsplash break, Hallmark Stone will remake the top and prioritize the installation of the new countertop or splash. Delays may occur if additional matching material needs to be sourced in order to remake pieces. No compensation will be provided for delays occurring due to a broken top or splash.

If you are hosting a party or event in your home after the installation is complete, please make sure to give yourself several weeks of cushion between the schedule completion and the event. Delays in major construction projects are common and occur for many unforeseen reasons. No compensation will be provided for delays or for the impact these delays may have on parties or events planned by the customer.

What if I find a chip? Small chips occur in most Granite and Quartz installations. One of the final steps in the installation process is to fill small chips. Epoxy combined with natural stone is used to fill these chips. If you find a chip after installation is complete, please mark it by placing a small piece of masking tape by the chip and call Hallmark Stone to schedule a follow-up.

Steps & Timeline for your New Countertops!

- _____ Tops purchased
- _____ Customer contacted by Hallmark Stone to review details of the job and review process.
- _____ Customer to provide alternate phone numbers, email, and the correct jobsite address
- _____ Color, edge, splash, sink, and other selections determined
- _____ Sinks & Appliances delivered to job site
- _____ Cabinets, including end panels, installed and level (if necessary)
- _____ Templates Made. A primary decision making adult must be on-site. All changes made after this point will result in delays and additional costs.
- _____ Final paperwork & pricing confirmed with Designer or Contractor before the job goes into production
- _____ If material requires a digital layout, that will be emailed 24-48 hours after template. This must be approved by the customer before we can proceed.
- _____ Installation Date Scheduled with customer. The customer must verbally confirm that they are ready when called. Installation will be cancelled if Hallmark does not hear back from customer.
- _____ Installation Date confirmed 2 days before installation, and time frame window for our arrival is given.
- _____ One day prior to installation remove all items from the sink and cooktop cabinet(s). If there are existing countertops, and Hallmark Stone is not contracted to remove them, please have them removed and the sink disconnected. Please remove breakables and plants which are hard to dust from the room and clear a path from the entrance to the work area.
- _____ Crews call 30-60 minutes before arriving at your home.

- _____ Countertops installed. Undermount sinks mounted. 4-inch standard splash installed. Custom height splash and full height splash measurements taken. Most installs take a few hours.
- _____ Plumber can connect sink and water 24 hours after tops installed (If custom height splash still needs to be installed, the plumber should come 24 hours after the splash installation.)
- _____ Reminder for custom height splash installation 2 days before installation, and timeframe window for our arrival is given.
- _____ Custom height splash installed.
- _____ Post Installation Follow-Up sent after completed installation.
- _____ Enjoy your new stone countertops! We love seeing finished projects, so feel free to show off your new countertops and send us some photos!

Key Points to Remember!

Key points to keep in mind throughout this process include the following:

- The customer must be on-site at the time of templating to review any radiused corners, review seam locations, overhangs and other questions that commonly arise.
- Because of the inherent characteristics of natural stone, no two pieces of granite, such as sections of a countertop, will be identical.
- Quartz contains crushed quartz. Color pooling occurs to some degree on all slabs.
- New sinks, faucets and appliances (cooktops, slide in ranges, dishwashers) must be on-site at the time of templating.
- Cabinets must be fully and permanently installed including all finish panels at the time of templating.
- Undermount sink cutouts will be made to overhang the sink bowls by approximately $1/8$ - $1/4$ inch.
- The customer should expect some dust to continue to settle for a few days after the installer has left.
- Most Granite and Quartz applications contain seams – which can be seen and felt. While we indicate the most likely location of your seams when your countertops are templated, we reserve the right to change the location of the seams while we are fabricating the tops.
- Any changes made after template will cause delays and incur charges.
- For colors with a strong vein direction or pattern, we will provide a high resolution picture depicting how the veins will look on your countertops.
- During transportation a top can and will sometimes break. Remakes will be completed quickly, provided material is available.
- The maximum unsupported overhang for Granite and Quartz is 10". All overhangs greater than 10" will require additional bracing or decorative corbels.
- Quartz countertops do not require sealing, ever. Natural Granite countertops can either have PermaSealer applied in our shop prior to installation, or you can use a topical sealer annually in your home.

Our goal is to make sure you are well informed so this process goes smoothly for you. You will enjoy the beauty and durability of these countertops for many years. Thank you for letting us bring the beauty of nature into your life.