Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: What is a Natural Stone Surface countertop?
There are many different types such as Granite, Marble, Soapstone, Quartzite and Limestone. These are natural materials, with natural characteristics and are mined in quarries all over the world.

Q: What is a Quartz (or Natural Quartz) countertop?
This material has the look and feel of natural stone, but is actually stronger due to its engineered make-up. This material is typically made of 93% natural quartz, manufactured with resin, colorants and other materials. The end result is a material that does not stain, does not require sealing and will not breed bacteria. This material also typically comes with a minimum ten (10) year warranty from the manufacturer.

Q: What is a Hard Surface countertop?
Any material that is fabricated typically using sophisticated machinery. Examples are granite, natural stones, quartz, porcelain, sintered and recycled surfaces.
Q: What is a Solid Surface countertop?
This is a man-made material that does not stain, does not require sealing and will not breed bacteria. This material has the ability to be adhered together, allowing a “seamless” appearance, although the seams are meant to be inconspicuous, but not invisible. This material also typically comes with a minimum ten (10) year warranty from the manufacturer.

Q: What is a Plastic Laminate countertop?
This is a man-made material that is adhered to a wood-type frame. This material has many colors and textures but can scratch and chip more easily than hard or solid surfaces.

Q: What is a Recycled/”Green” countertop?
These types of products are made with recycled materials such as glass, concrete, paper or metals. These countertops do require maintenance but each surface has different requirements.

Q: What is a Wood countertop?

Natural wood comes in many different species, colors, textures and variations. Just like natural stone, each piece of wood is unique. This material can scratch and chip more easily than hard or solid surfaces.

Q: What is a Pre-Fab Granite countertop?
For an economical option, granite already cut into blanks (26"x96") can be fabricated to fit your required dimensions. This prefabricated material is already edged with an eased edge and this material is not guaranteed to match if using multiple blanks. Seams, which normally run back to front, will be diagonal and located in corners.

Q: How should I clean my countertops?
For most materials, every day cleaning can be accomplished with mild dish soap and water. There are also cleaners available at your local home improvement stores. To avoid water streaks, wipe counters dry after cleaning. Windex® (without ammonia) or similar products can be used to clean up excess oil but are not
recommended for daily use due to the acidic levels in the product. For best results, consult the manufacturer's website for clean and care suggestions.

Q; Can I stain my countertops?
Almost anything can be stained, but sealed natural stone will resist most common stains. Solid Surface, Quartz, Porcelain and Sintered surfaces are incredibly difficult to be stained due to their chemical makeup. Plastic laminate will resist many stains, but cannot be sealed to be "stain-proof". Recycled products and wood can be more susceptible to stains so please consult your Account Manager for exact directions.

Q: How often do I need to seal my countertops?
The Natural Stone Institute recommends sealing natural stone once every 6 to 12 months. Using highly acidic/harsh chemicals or direct heat may deteriorate the original sealer, therefore requiring sealing more often. If water is no longer beading up on the top, it's time to reseal. Over sealing can lead to a hazy look. Natural quartz, solid surface and plastic laminate do not require sealing. Many recycled materials require sealing every three to six months using a wax sealer.

Q: I left a cold drink on my hard surface and now there is a dark ring. What should I do?
Nothing. Just as the cold liquid inside the glass pulls water from the air to create sweat on the outside of the glass, the cold has condensed water (under the sealer) within the stone. Simply remove the glass; wipe up excess water, the condensed water within the stone will dissipate, typically within 24 hours.

Q: Why are Customers encouraged to view their natural stone slabs prior to fabrication?

Stone is a natural material and color variations, veining, pitting, inclusions, fissures, fill and other naturally-occurring characteristics are very common and perfectly normal. There may be vast differences between samples viewed and a customer's actual material. Because this material is a natural product, consistency cannot be guaranteed, even within a single slab. Some materials are very consistent while other colors may change in color/shading/veining from slab to slab or within the slab (from top to bottom or left to right).

Q: What am I looking for when I view my natural stone material?
You should be looking at the overall coloring of the natural stone, to be sure that this is what you envisioned for your project. Since tiles, paint, flooring and wallpaper come in various shades it is much easier to match these items after you have selected your natural stone slab. Also, some natural stones have pitting or surface blemishes that causes the stone to feel rough or textured in spots.

Q: Do I have to view my new countertop material before it is fabricated?
No, as some materials are very consistent. However, other materials may change in color, shading or veining throughout the entire slab. Since quartz, solid surface and plastic laminate are manufactured, most (but not all) patterns are consistent with the sample that you viewed. Please note that the choice to view your material is up to you, however if you choose not to view your material (natural material) prior to fabrication, you will be required to sign a waiver.
All natural stones are products of nature and no two pieces are exactly alike. Color, veining and texture may differ with each piece. ABSOLUTELY NO CLAIMS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER FABRICATION FOR REASONS OF COLOR, TEXTURE, CONSISTANCY OR VEINING.

Q: What do seams look like?
For hard surfaces, the standard seam allowance between two pieces of granite can range from 1/16” to 1/8” wide. A color matched stone adhesive is used to join the two pieces of countertop. Once cured (approximately 4-6 hours), this adhesive is food safe. Seams are necessary and are not invisible. We will do our best to provide a clean seam and color-match the basic color tone of the hard surface.
For solid surface, the material is adhered together and an inconspicuous seam is made. Please note that these seams are not necessarily invisible.
For plastic laminate, the material is glued together and seams are minimized, but visible.

Q: Can I have countertops installed over existing cabinets?
New countertops can be installed over existing cabinetry; however we will not be able to install new countertops if the cabinets are not structurally sound or are not level. If the cabinets are not level or structurally sound upon arrival of our installers, your installation

will be rescheduled once these issues have been rectified. Cabinets need to be leveled within ¼" over a 10 foot length. A fee of $199.00 will be charged for a job site that is not ready to accept the new countertops.

Q: I have tile above my current backsplash. Will the new splashes meet these tile lines?

Your new countertops will be installed within level tolerances but your tile may not be installed completely level. We recommend removing existing tile prior to installation of your new countertops and replacing the tile after new tops are installed.

If the tile is not perfectly straight, the installation crew will field measure for the splashes after the countertops are installed. 3-5 days later, the custom height splashes will be installed. An additional fee may be incurred for the second required trip.

In addition, your old countertops may have been 1 ½" thick while your new countertops maybe 1 ¼" or some other thickness. This could cause a gap between the top of the new countertop and the tile backsplash.

Q: What is the longest countertop piece I can have without a seam?
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For hard natural surfaces, seam quantity and location will be determined after the field measure by the engineering department. Generally, natural slab lengths vary from 100" to 125" while the height ranges from 65" to 75"; the average slab length is 68"x115".

Natural quartz slab sizes have sizes ranging from 55" x 120" to 65"x133" depending on the manufacturer (and design pattern). Also keep in mind the weight of hard surfaces, which can weigh up to 20 pounds per square foot. For example, an island measuring 48" x 96" could weigh up to 600 pounds and would require 3-4 men to carry. In addition, the entry into the home must accommodate this size countertop, which may even prohibit larger sizes depending on hallways, elevators or staircases. Long splashes may need to be cut into more than one piece to prevent breakage during transit and installation. Seams are at the discretion of the field measurer and fabrication departments. The typical maximum length of a splash is 60".

With that said, the largest countertop that we will carry with one crew is 96"x26". Anything larger requires extra handling within our factory and during installation. There is a fee for these larger countertop pieces.

Q: Why is 1 ¼" (3cm) material for hard surfaces recommended for kitchens?

In most kitchens you will have long lengths of countertop which could contain a large cut out (sink or cooktop). To minimize the risk of breakage during fabrication and installation, the 1 ¼" (3cm) material is recommended. ¾" (2cm) material is more common with smaller countertops or vertical cladding.

Q: What is the maximum overhang allowed?

For hard surfaces, any overhang up to 12" will rely upon the 2/3 rule: 2/3 of the material needs to be supported for the 1/3 overhang. As an example, a 24" cabinet can safely have up to a 12" overhang without support. Quartz can have an unsupported overhang up to 14" (using the 2/3 rule).
For solid surfaces and plastic laminate, any overhang larger than 6" will need to be supported. A solid wood subtop will be installed under the countertop by The Countertop Factory for an extra fee.
Generally any overhang over 12" should be supported. Supports can range from wood corbels to metal brackets (flat stock or angled). Customers will be advised if supports are needed at time of measure, which can change after engineering reviews the final dimensions and overall material sizes. Supports purchased by SIS will also include installation. Supports that are provided by the Customer must be installed by the Customer prior to countertop installation.

Q: Why would I want the underside of the hard surface polished on an overhang? In the situation of a breakfast bar facing a family room, where the underside of the countertop might be visible when seated, the undersides of the over-hang can be polished. This can be done for an additional charge. Please speak with your Account Manager for pricing.

Q: Can I place hot items directly on my countertops?

Some granites can tolerate temperatures in excess of 1200 degrees (F.) and you might be able to put direct heat on the countertop. SIS recommends never putting items from your oven, stove top or grill directly on the granite surface without a trivet or hot pad. Once items have cooled, placing them directly on the stone countertop would be acceptable.
For quartz, it is recommended to use a trivet and direct heat is not advisable due to the chemical makeup of this material.
For solid surfaces, plastic laminate and wood, No. These materials are much softer and direct heat is not advisable.

Q: Can I use my countertop as a cutting board?

While you can find websites that indicate it is ok to use certain countertop materials as a cutting board
(darker granites, quartz), we always recommend not to do it. If you want to purchase a matching cutting board for your kitchen, please ask us and we can get you pricing.
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