

Budget Backsplash Over Old Tile

Your exact shopping list and step-by-step installation order.

Skip the dusty demolition and tile directly over your existing backsplash. Print this guide to calculate exact materials and install your new emerald layer with confidence.

● Essential Project Timings

5 mins

Time citrus degreaser sits on grease

15 mins

Wait time before wiping grout haze

20 mins

Max tiling time per thinset application

2 hours

Air dry time after wet cleaning

24 hours

Thinset curing time before applying grout

72 hours

Unsanded grout full curing time

1/16 in

Spacer size for uniform grout joints

Old tile stays beneath

Save days of demolition! Just ensure every existing square is firmly attached, degrease the surface thoroughly, and scuff the glossy glaze with 80-grit sandpaper for maximum thinset adhesion.



● The Installation Order

- 1 Center on the sink** Draw a plumb vertical pencil line behind the sink faucet to guarantee symmetrical border cuts.
- 2 Cut row under cabinets** Hide your narrow horizontal cut strips directly against the upper cabinets to absorb structural variations.
- 3 Back-butter and set** Comb thinset at a 45-degree angle and back-butter every tile to prevent sliding down.
- 4 Outlet box extenders** Install plastic extenders to bring recessed receptacles flush with the new emerald tile for safety.
- 5 Caulk the counter seam** Run a smooth bead of

● Measure Before You Buy

- ☐ Multiply width by height in inches, divide by 144.
- ☐ Count every electrical receptacle to tally the box extenders.
- ☐ Measure exposed linear inches at open walls for edge trim.
- ☐ Tap the old tile with a trowel to find looseness.

● Hardware & Finishing List

- ☐ Plastic box extenders: Buy one per electrical receptacle.
- ☐ White silicone caulk: Buy a tube per 25 linear feet.
- ☐ Brass transition strip: Match to your exposed linear inches.
- ☐ Citrus degreaser and a stiff nylon bristle brush.
- ☐ Microfiber cloths and sandpaper for surface prep.

● Square Foot Materials

Sq Ft	Ceramic subway tile	Modified polymer thinset	Unsanded grout
35	39 sq ft	35 lbs	4 lbs
45	50 sq ft	45 lbs	5 lbs
55	61 sq ft	55 lbs	6 lbs

Thinset comes in 50lb bags; unsanded grout comes in 10lb boxes.

● Adjusting For Your Space

Find your row: **Your site conditions**

Your site conditions	Your pick	Why
Top gap under one inch	Shift bottom row up	Allows for a wider cut
Counter gap over 1/4 in	Insert foam backer rod	Supports the flexible silicone bead
Tile is glossy ceramic	Use unsanded grout	Prevents scratching the delicate glaze
Thinset pokes through gaps	Scrape with damp toothpick	Keeps future grout lines uniform

● Project Notes & Layout Math

Enjoy your gorgeous new kitchen—you did a beautiful job!