

What's the best way to polish dolomitic marble?

If you've worked on dolomitic marble before, you already know it's not the same animal as your typical calcite marble. On paper, it looks like marble, feels like marble, and most homeowners call it marble, but when you put a machine on it, you find out quickly that it doesn't behave like Carrara or Crema Marfil.

Dolomitic marbles have a higher magnesium content, which makes them harder than calcite marbles. That sounds like a good thing, but the tradeoff is that they don't take a polish as easily. You can spend all day on one with the same diamonds and powders you use on other marbles and end up frustrated with a dull, hazy finish.

So, what's the trick?

Start with the Right Diamonds

First off, don't try to cut corners. You'll need to take dolomitic marble through a full set of honing steps. Skipping grits or starting too high will leave you with a lifeless finish. I recommend going at least up to 800 or 1500 grit with quality resin-bond diamonds. Some jobs may even need to go higher before you introduce polishing powders.

Choosing the Right Powder

Here's where most contractors hit a wall. Standard marble polish powders don't always do the job. Dolomitic marble often responds better to specially formulated powders designed for harder marbles. Look for powders that contain oxalates blended with other chemicals tailored for dolomite. They'll bite better and bring up the clarity and depth you're looking for.

Heat and Pressure Matter

This isn't a stone you can baby. Dolomitic marble usually needs more pressure and heat during the polishing process. Work smaller areas, use a slow, controlled motion, and let the powder react. Too little pressure and you won't activate the chemistry. Too much and you risk burning or orange peel. It's a balance, and it comes down to experience.

Sometimes You Can't Get a Mirror Finish

This is the hard truth. Not all dolomitic marbles will give you that high, glassy shine clients love. Some are just too stubborn. You can get them smooth, reflective, and even, but they may top out at a satin or semi-gloss look. Don't oversell the result. Set realistic expectations with your client right from the start.

My Go-To Method

Here's my usual process:

1. Hone up to at least 800 grit, sometimes higher.
2. Use a dolomitic marble powder with a weighted floor machine, working small sections.
3. Apply steady pressure, keep the slurry wet but not flooded, and let the chemistry do the heavy lifting.
4. Rinse well, dry buff if needed, and seal if the stone is prone to etching or staining.

Dolomitic marble is polishable, but it makes you earn it. The best way isn't always the fastest way. Quality diamonds, the right powder, proper pressure, and honest communication with your client are the keys. If you treat dolomitic marble like a softer calcite marble, you'll fight it the whole way. Treat it like the harder hybrid it is, and you'll end up with a finish both you and your client can live with.

Note: Dolomite-specific powders usually boosted with different abrasives (diamond fines, tin oxide, or magnesium-friendly compounds) that cut a little deeper while the oxalate reaction kicks in slower. This combo helps polish a denser, harder stone that doesn't "burn" as easily under heat and pressure.

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