

How To Prepare Dry Mortar For Use:

1. Wear gloves on your hands and a face mask with a fine filter over mouth and nose.
 2. Pour a small amount of water (probably only a 1/4 cup or less) into a small plastic or tin container (grab one out of the recycling). Scoop out about the same amount of dry mortar as water and slowly mix with a paint stick or old fork. You want no lumps. It will be runny.
 3. Continue adding mortar powder, 1 or 2 Tablespoons at a time, mixing in between each addition to always keep the mixture smooth. You have added enough powder to the water when the mixture is the consistency of frosting. (Well...sandy frosting-not the kind you would actually want to eat-grey too-yuck). You want NO lumps!
 4. Now it needs to *slake for 10 minutes* so just leave it alone, uncovered and go make yourself a cup of tea and by the time the tea has steeped and been carried back to your workroom the mortar will be ready to scoop into the milk bag to use.
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The Grouting Process:

1. Use a mask and gloves as you did for mixing mortar. The mixing process is also the same as for mortar except you can leave the grout a little more mushy than you did the mortar-more like sandy sour cream than the sandy frosting we were thinking of for the mortar. One more yummy image. Let it slake the 10 minutes.
2. Push the grout in between the tiles of your mosaic. You can do this with a grout float or you can just use your gloved hands or a rubber spatula that you might use to scrape out batter when cooking. The idea is to fill in all of those crevices. Don't worry about getting it on the face of the mosaic. You will wipe it off in a few minutes. Just enjoy mushing stuff around! Think mud pies.
3. Now gently scrape off the heavy clumps of grout on the mosaic face. Be really gentle doing this if you have tiny mosaic bits or sections that stick above the main level of the other tiles. There will still be a haze of grout on your mosaic face.
4. To get off that final haze there are a couple of ways you can go about it. The most common way and the way that is used if you are installing a tile floor, is to do a series of wipes across the surface with a special tiling/grout sponge, rinsing and squeezing the sponge out really well between each time so that you are not adding water to the grout as you work. The other technique that I use more and more now, is to rub the mosaic with dry newspaper sheets, using any tool like a dental pic or my other favourite-the cuticle trimmer, to pick off any grout pieces that are difficult to get to and un-wanted. I find this way less difficult because you are not left with grout water you have to figure out how to dispose of. I have also been known to use old tooth brushes to wear away still moist grout.
5. Next day you can give a final polish to the surface if there is still haze.

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