

First, labor costs begin to climb in line with more elaborate patterns and materials. Keep it simple. As a purist, I prefer bathroom tile to err on the cleaner and more elegant side. I recommend pure white marbles (avoid Carrera marble with its muddy gray background), white ceramics or even white quartz materials are great options for all of your major coverage. Keep the pattern and color choices restricted to walls, window coverings, fixtures and accessories.

I like to choose a classic white marble subway tile, say Calacutta, for the shower walls. It always looks timeless, and can go from trad to mod with ease. To save money on floor tile go with large scale - fewer cuts means fewer dollars. Even in small spaces I prefer oversized floor tiles grouted with a minimum seam for an overall larger-than-life effect.

For economy in bath and shower surrounds, pick up less expensive ceramic tiles from any "big box" store and mix in a classic natural stone trim, or liner, set at 60"-65" H (this height falls above thermostatic controls and below the shower head.) You'll get the look of a custom tile installation at a fraction of the cost. Again, I recommend keeping grout width to a minimum for both aesthetics and maintenance.

My general rule with any home improvement is to always buy the very best quality you can afford and to hire the best help. Your bathroom is a place you spend a lot of "quality" time in, and it should reflect your personal style, as well as function beautifully.

Keep in mind that designing a smart space isn't about spending a lot of money, but rather it's about making good choices. Do your homework. Ask for help. Make good choices.



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*Sleek travertine and a wall of glass make this modern bathroom feel airy and chic.*

*Photo courtesy Brandon Neff Design*