

FAQ's about the Better-Bench™ Products

Can this bench really hold the weight?

YES! Better-Bench products have a structurally engineered 400 lb live load capacity without the need to connect directly to the wood framing inside the wall.

How can I be sure?

Over 10 years of successful installations performed by professional contractors and homeowners alike provides a high level of assurance. This capability is achieved through the engineering of "shear force" rather than pull-out or "tension" loading. For instance, you may be familiar with the ease of pulling a fixture of some sort out of a wall when attached with hollow wall anchors in 1/2" gyp board. Have you ever tried to push that fixture straight down? Our suggestion is to try one—you will be amazed!

What do I fill it with?

A "dry pack" deck mortar is used to fill the bench. **Do not use Thin-Set mortar!** The mix ratio of the described mortar is 4 parts sand to 1 part cement- you may also use a pre-bagged mortar mix which is available at many of the tile locations that stock Better-Bench products, additionally, you will find this mix at lumber yards, hardware stores, Home Depot, Lowes, etc., under the common name of; mason mix, brick mortar, or deck mud. You will be adding just enough water to the dry mix to allow you to "chop" (a garden hoe works best!) the mixture to consistency that allows you to pick up a handful and shape it into a ball without getting it all over your hands. Be sure to blend the mixture to the point that all dry powder pockets have been eliminated.

Then what?

Fill the entire bench with the mortar, and pack it tight as you go with a wood float, block of wood or even a steel trowel. Make sure the material is in all corners completely. Allow the mortar to build up about a 1/4 to 3/8 of an inch along the back wall(s) of the unit and screed it flush to the front lip to provide adequate drainage of the horizontal surface (this is not necessary in "dry" areas). Then add a small amount of water to the remaining mix to make it a little bit stickier. You will then apply this mix to the front face and screed it flush with the top and bottom edge of the channel. Allow the unit to set sufficiently prior to beginning your tile process.

Do I need to connect to wood studs or install blocking?

No! Better-Bench products are designed to meet a 400 lb load capacity by using the supplied hollow wall anchors. However, wood framing members may be encountered during installation, or the installer may just feel more "comfortable" connecting to framing. When this is the case, discard the hollow wall anchors and use the pan screws that are also provided.

What type of backing (substrate) do I need?

Better-Bench is designed to be mounted over any U.B.C. (Uniform Building Code) or T.C.A. (Tile Council of America) approved tile substrate.

The list includes such materials as:

cementitious based substrates; Wonderboard, Hardibacker, Durarock or mortar bed installations; gypsum based substrates; Denshield, green board, or standard sheetrock (in dry areas), as well as over alternative mounting methods; Schluter Ditra, Wedi board, or any other building code approved surfaces.

When should I install the bench, before I start tiling?

Better-Bench is an extremely adaptable system. You may install the product over the finish tile at any time. However, the optimum method would be to mount the product directly to the face of the substrate. This may be done before you begin tiling the wall, or for an additional advantage, you may begin tiling and then when you get to the course of tile where you wish to mount the bench, take a few minutes and mount the bench at this time. Then finish your wall tile and fill and tile the bench at the end (this method may save a few cuts of tile and eliminates the need to reach under the bench to lay tile)

Do I tile the bottom?

It is not necessary to tile the bottom of the bench. It is mounted down low and therefore the bottom is not visible. The alloyed aluminum will also not rust or corrode and leaves a smooth metal surface exposed that will not harbor mold or mildew growth and is easy to clean. You may tile the bottom if desired by using a metal bonding tile mastic, or by simply screwing a piece of backer board substrate material to the bottom of the bench with galvanized flathead screws. Remember, you must leave the weep hole clear of any obstruction so that any penetrating moisture will be able to escape from the interior of the bench. Call us for additional recommendations if needed.

Do I need additional waterproofing?

NO! Better-Bench is designed to mount in a manner that does not require additional waterproofing membranes, nor will it compromise the membranes in the wall. Waterproofing is accomplished by injecting a small amount of caulk in the screw locations prior to their insertion. Additionally, you will apply a bead of caulk over the top most edge of the bench unit where it meets the wall. This will divert any moisture that has penetrated the grout anywhere above the bench line, into the bench itself, and away from the screw locations. Caulk may be added around the fastener heads inside the bench for additional assurance against water penetration at the screw locations.

All caulking is performed prior to applying the mortar!

Does the mortar eat away the aluminum?

Our products are produced of an “alloyed” aluminum which is engineered and suitable for a direct mortar contact. Etching of the aluminum does occur and is considered a normal reaction upon mortar contact. In some instances, usually if excessive moisture is allowed to penetrate the finished unit through grout transmission, or if the initial mix is to “wet”, this reaction may continue to cause unsightly staining of the aluminum. It is therefore recommended that the mix ratio and water content be carefully observed during installation, and that the tiled top surface of the bench, be sealed with a commercially available grout sealer. Generally, the sealers are recommended for all tile and grouted surfaces, are easily applied and relatively inexpensive to acquire.

Are the units A.D.A compliant?

The physical size and shape of our adjustable bench model meets or exceeds A.D.A. minimum requirements. However- one aspect of the A.D.A. guidelines calls for the bench to be of a folding type. We are unsure as to the need for that particular aspect, and therefore recommend you check with your local building department for further information regarding A.D.A compliance issues and available variance options that may be available for your specific project.