What Are the Hardest Stones?

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Countertops are often the centerpiece of many kitchens – and homes in general. Because this is the case, you will want to find a surface that looks nice and can withstand the daily wear and tear it will face. One way you can tell which countertops are less prone to scratches and other damages is by evaluating hardness. Hardness is based on the Mohs scale, which ranks natural minerals on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the softest and 10 being the hardest.

What Are the Hardest and Softest Minerals on the Mohs Scale?

The hardest mineral on the Mohs scale is diamond, which ranks at a 10. On the other hand, the softest is talc, which ranks at a 1. Falling closely behind diamonds on the Mohs scale are corundum (9), titanium (9) and topaz (8). While you cannot have a countertop made out of diamonds, there are still many great options for hard stone countertops. Different stones are made up of different minerals, which impacts their overall hardness.

Where Do Stone Countertop Materials Rank on the Mohs Scale?

Among the harder natural stone countertop materials on the Mohs scale are granite and gemstone, which each rank at an 8 on the scale. These countertops are the least susceptible to scratching and many other damages.

Slightly softer than granite and gemstone, quartzite, quartz and onyx each rank at a 7 on the Mohs scale. While not as hard as granite and gemstone, these surfaces are still very hard and are unlikely to scratch.

Falling down on the scale a little more are popular countertop options marble, travertine and slate. Each of these stones ranks at a 4 on the scale. You will have to be very careful not to scratch these surfaces, albeit they are not the softest options on the scale.

The softest countertop options on the Mohs scale are limestone (3) and travertine (1). These countertops will be very prone to scratching if you are not careful. Soapstone in particular is known for sustaining scratches, although many homeowners feel that these scratches give the surface some character.

Stone Countertop Materials: Where Do They Rank?

Granite	8
Gemstone	8
Quartzite	7
Quartz	7
Onyx	7
Marble	4
Travertine	4
Slate	4

Limestone	3
Soapstone	1

What Are the Best Countertop Choices for Hardness?

If hardness is one of your primary concerns when selecting a countertop material, granite and gemstone will be your best bets. However, your budget will likely come into play as well, in which case granite will be the better option. On average, granite countertops cost between $32 to $75 per square foot, while gemstone countertops start at $100 per square foot, and often exceed that number.

On the flip side, if you do not want to deal with scratches, perhaps soapstone countertops are not the best choice for your home. But as mentioned before, many homeowners feel that some scratches can give a soapstone countertop character.

Popular materials like marble, travertine and slate fall in the middle ranges of the scale. These surfaces certainly can be prone to scratching, yet it is not hard to avoid scratching if you exercise the proper amount of caution. Factoring in many other elements, hardness is just one thing that can help steer you toward a particular countertop option.

By using the Mohs Hardness Scale, you can easily figure out which stone countertop options are harder and which are softer materials. Based on this, you can find a beautiful, strong and durable countertop for your home. In addition, whether you choose a harder stone like granite or gemstone, or a softer stone like limestone or soapstone, you can be prepared to be as cautious as you need to around the surface.

Reviewing this guide can help you keep in mind what the Mohs Scale of Hardness is and how it can be applied to evaluate different countertop options. Finding a countertop that is suitable for your home is a matter of what is most important to you, whether that is the material’s hardness or other factors.