

## TILER TRAINING IN GERMANY

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|             |                                                                              |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1941 - 1944 | Tile fixing apprenticeship course                                            |
| 1944 - 1948 | Master Tiler training                                                        |
| 1949 - 1956 | Master Tiler in a tile installing firm in Düsseldorf                         |
| 1956        | Founding of own firm in Neuss                                                |
| 1961        | Collaboration in the Professional Tile Fixers Association                    |
|             | Professional Education Commission                                            |
|             | Master Examinations Commission                                               |
|             | Tariff Commission                                                            |
| 1978 - 1989 | President of the Professional Tile Fixers Group for North Rhein-Westfalen    |
| Since 1988  | President of the German Professional Tile Fixers Association                 |
| Since 1992  | President of the Professional Tile Fixers Associations of the European Union |

German tiling enterprise, involving 9,000 firms and 38,000 workers, with a yearly turnover of 390 million DM, is an efficient, extremely well-performing trade.

Tile fixers are skilled, qualified specialists, capable of executing with technical excellence the varying tiling handicrafts, including mosaic and marble tiling, as well as preparing the respective backgrounds, and installing cladding and paving with attractive designs and refined configurations.

This skill is the result of good professional training.

It was thus that Germany could boast the world's best tile fixer at the International Competition for Professional Skills held in Taiwan.

Tiler training commences after the normal school education cycle has ended.

People are then usually seventeen years old.

Tile fixing firms hire apprentices by means of an apprenticeship contract, which resembles a normal work contract.

Apprenticeship lasts 3 years and ends with a Tiler examination.

Instruction involves the following three main points:

1. Practical training at a building site,
2. Learning special work techniques at a Vocational Training Centre outside the firm,  
and
3. Theoretical instruction at a Vocational School.

Practical training takes place at normal building sites where the (male or female) apprentice works together with one or more tile fixers in a team.

This means that the apprentice carries out tiling tasks together with a tiler and is thus taught how to install tile and perform jointing by the tile fixers themselves. That is to say, tile installation.

Teaching outside the firm takes place at Regional Vocational Training Centres for the building sector.

Up to 15 professional activities relating to the building sector are taught at these centres, and each trade has a room at its disposal for the specific professional instruction involved.

Thus, all the apprentices of a Region are taught all the special tiling techniques together, by instructors, most of whom are Master Tilers.

Germany has 200 Regional Vocational Training Centres for the building sector.

This training focuses on:

Teaching skills and techniques that complement the training imparted by the enterprises, which cannot be taught at building sites.

This training is needed:

**Firstly:**

because teaching these techniques at building sites would be too time-intensive and costly.

**Secondly:**

because many firms specialize in specific tasks and therefore lack experience in other work techniques.

**And thirdly:**

in order to guarantee that **each** apprentice learns **every** skill and technique in our profession.

The following lists some of the skills taught and learnt at the Regional Training Centres:

- Measuring up for tile installation
- Scaffolding
- Preparation of brush coatings.
- Installing tile in a mortar bed.
- Thick bed and thinset tile installations
- Installing concrete slabs in sand beds
- Tile cutting, polishing and drilling techniques.
- Preparation of materials for thermal and acoustic insulation, as well as water-repellent materials.
- Preparation of expansion joints, dry construction, wooden framework and timberwork.
- Preparation of renderings and backgrounds for tiling.
- Installing and jointing natural stone, tiles, mosaics and marble.
- Minor masonry tasks, baths, showers, partitions and supports.
- Work on stairways.
- Making arcs and curves.
- Installing trim units and ornamental borders.
- Installing skirting and other special accessories.

Besides training on site and at the Regional Vocational Training Centre, the apprentice also receives theoretical instruction.

This takes place at a Vocational School.

Theoretical professional instruction is given here, which complements the practical training.

For example:

- Basic knowledge of physics and chemistry for construction.
- Knowledge regarding tiling backgrounds.
- Draughtsmanship, technical calculations, mass determinations, knowledge of building materials and types of tiles, colour theory and design.
- Basic knowledge of technical regulations as well as the basics of business and trade.
- English, physical education, etc. instruction in dealing with customers.

Subjects relating to Humanities, Social Politics and Economics are also taught.

The professional training content and examination requirements are uniformly stipulated by law for all the States of the Federal Republic.

Tiler training is thus guaranteed to have about the same level in each.

The following sets out the time distribution involved in training:

|                  |          |
|------------------|----------|
| Building sites   | 67 weeks |
| Training Centres | 37 weeks |
| School           | 40 weeks |
| Holidays         | 12 weeks |

Apprenticeship ends with the Tiler examination.

The apprentice then becomes a qualified Tile Fixer and works in a tiling enterprise.

The apprentice receives a training remuneration:

|                        |             |
|------------------------|-------------|
| The first year this is | DM 964.00   |
| The second year        | DM 1,500.00 |
| The third year         | DM 1,892.00 |

The building enterprises all contribute together to cover the costs involved in this "expensive" apprenticeship.

Every firm, whether it hires an apprentice or not, pays 1.75 of the salaries into a Social Fund; a total of 600 million DM per year.

This Fund then pays 75% of all the expenses to the firms involved in training apprentices.

Expenses amounting to round DM 16,000 - 18,000 then remain to be borne by these firms.

However, the market obliges us to take these expenses upon us owing to the lack of qualified workers. This is because skilled tile fixers are our firms' "capital", i.e., tile fixers capable of correctly installing all those lovely materials (slabs, ceramic materials, natural stone and mosaics) that industry offers.

The tile fixer plays the most important part in tiling finishes. Only a well-installed tile is a good advertisement for ceramics.

## THE MASTER TILER EXAMINATION

The Master Tiler examination is the highest step in tiler training.

Many tile fixers continue their training and take the Master Tiler examination. For them this examination represents the end of their professional training.

The Master Tiler diploma gives its owner the right to found a company of his own and train apprentices.

Aspiring Master Tilers usually prepare for the examination at a Master Tiler School.

In order to become a qualified Master Tiler, knowledge of the following subjects and skills is required:

Skilled practical work in accordance with all the building requirements; PART 1 of the Master examination requires preparing a masterpiece and a work test, in accordance with the relevant technical standards.

This could mean for example:

- Installing tiling resistant to chemical attack.
- Raising partitions.
- Preparation of renderings and tiling backgrounds.
- Preparation of thermal and acoustic insulation.

PART 2 of the examination involves a test of specialized theoretical knowledge in the following fields:

Technical mathematics  
Draughtsmanship  
Technology  
Colour theory and design  
Theory of building materials  
Calculations  
Calculating estimates  
Description of work performed and invoicing

This means for example:

Preparing detailed work and installation plans  
Knowledge of chemistry and physics for construction.  
Acquaintance with heat, noise and moisture protection.  
Knowledge of building materials and auxiliary materials for construction.

PARTS 3 and 4 of the examination require knowledge of economics, commerce, law, and work pedagogy.

Thus this involves for example:

Contractual agreements in the building sector  
Acquaintance with legislation regarding accident prevention and labour safety.  
Knowledge of the relevant technical regulations.

The technical regulations are:

DIN standards, Instruction sheets, General technical regulations.

The DIN standards regulate tiling generally, and material quality.

The Instruction sheets regulate special service applications such as:

Outdoor tile installations.  
Tiling on insulating layers.  
Installing tile in swimming pools.  
Instructions on alternative insulation in connection with tiling.  
Installing tile on heated floors, etc.

The Master Tiler must thus command a wide range of knowledge in order to survive in the marketplace.

All this knowledge and skill must guarantee that the Master Tiler will deliver an impeccable piece of work for his customer. The tiling firm is obliged by law to do so.

It is held responsible by law for 5 years for the characteristics of the materials laid down in the regulations, as well as for the quality and durability of the work performed.

These regulations are uniformly in force in all the States of the Federal Republic.

Finally, to sum up:

Tiler training in Germany has a very high level. The apprentice must learn all the professional aspects involved in installing tile.

As a result of good training, there is high quality tile installation and only thus is it possible for this professional sector in Germany to look back upon such a long tradition of successful work.

There is and will continue to be a great demand for well-trained tile fixers.

In order to attract young people to this profession, economic incentives must be offered and modern advertising methods should be used.

This takes place in Germany for example with campaign films or brochures.