

The Secret of the Dry Room



How a shower stays dry — slope, membrane, and a test before any pretty tile.

THE TRUE LINE

The Secret of the Dry Room

A True Line Book
Laid True · Ash's Yard

Written by Bryan Blair
A gift from Valley Tile
Northridge, California

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Written for young builders ages 8 to 18.
Free to read. Free to share with a family.

These methods are real. Tools can bite. Work with a grown-up.
Local building codes always beat a picture book.

The True Line · Six Books

Book One The Secret of Square, Level & Plumb

Book Two The Secret of the Fall

Book Three The Secret of the Waste Side

Book Four The Secret of the Scribe

Book Five The Secret of the Bed

Book Six The Secret of the Dry Room

How to Read a True Line Book

These books keep real trade secrets. Younger readers follow Ash and the pictures. Older readers use the green boxes and go outside with an adult. If you are sitting in a showroom, or in the car on the way to look at stone, the watching lists in the back will give your eyes something honest to do.

IF YOU ARE 8 TO 12

- Read the story first. Look hard at the pictures.
- Try the backyard tests with an adult.
- You do not need a job site. A hose, a board, and chalk are enough.
- New words live in the Word Chest at the back.
- If the house is being remodeled, watch one thing at a time.

IF YOU ARE 13 TO 18

- Read the green boxes. Those are working rules.
- Scale the numbers up. Bigger layouts, smaller percent error.
- Check your tools before you trust them.
- Saws, solder, drain chemicals, and live water are grown-up jobs.
- A trade is a promise: do the work true, even when no one is looking.



THE OPEN BATH

Tile Is Not a Raincoat

Wren the plumber and Flint the setter met in a torn-apart bathroom. The kids stood in the doorway. “People think tile keeps water in the shower,” Wren said. “Tile is a hard hat. Grout is a sponge with good manners. The raincoat is underneath.” That raincoat is a membrane, or an old-school pan liner, sitting on a floor that already slopes to the drain. If you are watching a bath come apart, the pretty tile comes off first. Under it should be a hill and a sealed coat. If those two things were skipped, the house will tell on them — not today, maybe, but on a Tuesday two years from now, in the ceiling below. Keeping water where it belongs is a kindness to the next person in the house. That is the whole book.

The Hill Comes First



Before any raincoat, the floor already wants a fall toward the drain — about a quarter inch per foot, the same honest hill Wren uses in a drain pipe. Water must want the drain even if the membrane is perfect. A flat shower is a pond. A pond finds a way out through the walls.

TRY THIS

On a cookie sheet, rest a marble. Tip the sheet a little. The marble walks to the low corner. That corner is your drain. If the marble wanders to a side wall, your hill is lying.

FOR OLDER BUILDERS

Old work builds a sloped mud bed, lays a liner, then a second thin bed the tile sits on. New work often slopes a board or a foam pan, then paints or sheets a membrane over everything. Both stories start with the hill. Never tile a flat wet floor and hope.

The Raincoat



A membrane is a sheet or a painted coat that water cannot cross. It turns up the walls, wraps the curb, and seals to the drain. Corners get extra care because water loves a fold. Flint pressed the sheet into the corner with his fingers the way you would make a bedsheet honest in a tight room. No tunnels. No pinholes.

TRY THIS

Line a shoebox with a plastic bag. Pour a cup of water in. If the bag is wrinkled at a corner, the water finds the wrinkle. Smooth the corner and try again.

FOR OLDER BUILDERS

Sheet membranes want full contact and sealed seams. Liquid membranes want the right thickness and enough dry time. Fasteners that puncture the pan below the water line are a future leak. Niches, benches, and soap shelves are extra corners. Treat them like the floor, not like decoration.

The Flood Test



Wren plugged the drain and filled the pan with water. Then they waited. A good test is dull. The water sits. The ceiling below stays dry. The pencil mark on the curb does not creep down. If the water falls, you found the leak while the walls were still honest enough to fix. That is courage, not delay.

TRY THIS

Fill a cake pan. Mark the water with a piece of tape. Wait. If the line drops and there is no sun to drink it, the pan is lying. A shower test is that idea with more at stake.

FOR OLDER BUILDERS

Plug the drain, fill to the top of the curb, and leave it long enough that a slow leak cannot hide. Write the start line. Check the room below. Do not tile over a test you skipped because the schedule was loud.

Where Showers Fail

Pretty tile hides these places. Watch them while the room is open.

THE INSIDE CORNERS

Wall-to-wall and wall-to-floor. Water lives in folds.

THE CURB

The little wall you step over. It must be sloped back into the shower, not out onto the bath floor.

THE NICHE AND THE BENCH

Extra boxes cut into the wall. Each one is a new pan that needs its own raincoat.

THE DRAIN

The membrane must clamp or seal to it. A pretty grate cannot save a missed seal.

Wren and Flint's Order

Do these in order. The pretty part is last here too.

1. AIM THE DRAIN

Height and place decided before the floor is built.

2. BUILD THE HILL

Slope to the drain. Check with a level and a marble if you must.

3. PUT ON THE RAINCOAT

Corners, curb, seams, drain. No punctures below the water.

4. TEST, THEN TILE

Flood it. Wait. Then Flint may comb his bed.

What Not to Do

Most wet ceilings began as a skipped step.

DON'T TRUST GROUT

Grout wets. Sealed grout still wets. The raincoat does the keeping.

DON'T TILE A FLAT PAN

A beautiful floor that ponds is still a pond.

DON'T RUSH THE TEST

A dry ceiling next year is worth a quiet afternoon now.

DON'T HIDE A PUNCTURE

A screw through a liner is a hole with a good excuse.

Three Real Projects

The Cookie-Sheet Hill

Ages 8+

Tip a tray until a marble walks to one corner. That corner is the drain. Try to make two hills meet at one low point.

The Shoebox Pan

Ages 10+

Line a box with a bag. Seal a pretend curb. Pour water. Watch the corners. Smooth any tunnel and test again.

The Mark-and-Wait

Ages 12+

Fill a cake pan. Tape the water line. Wait an hour. If the line drops, find why. That is a flood test you can do in a kitchen.

What to Watch in a Shower

Stand in the doorway. Do not step in the pan. The secrets are quiet.

THE HILL

Does a marble — or a splash — want the drain?

THE TURN-UP

Does the raincoat climb the wall, or stop at the floor like a bath mat?

THE CURB TILT

The top of the curb should lean back into the shower.

THE WAIT

Standing water in an empty pan is a good sign. It means someone is telling the truth early.

THE NICHE

A hole in the wall that holds soap is still a hole. It needs a coat.

THE FIRST TILE

If tile starts before a test, ask — kindly — whether the raincoat was proven.

Questions Worth Asking

Water will find the missed step. These questions help you find it first.

01 Why is tile not enough to keep a shower dry?

02 What does a flood test prove that a pretty floor cannot?

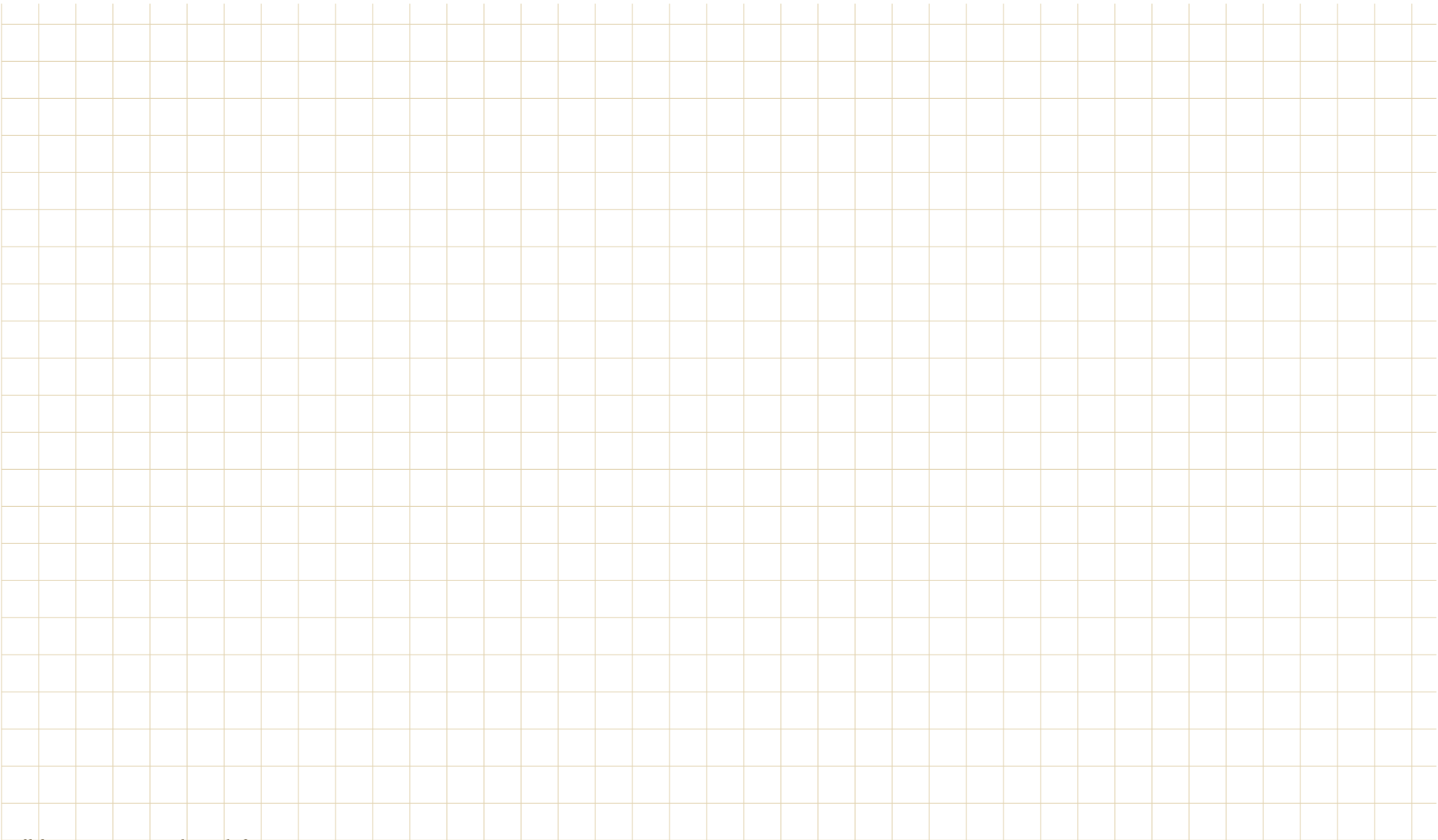
03 Why must the curb lean back into the shower?

04 A skipped test saves an afternoon and can cost a ceiling. When is patience the braver kind of work?

05 Keeping water where it belongs is a kindness to people you may never meet. How is that a way of being of service?

Draw the Dry Room

Draw a square shower. Mark the drain. Draw arrows for the hill. Color the raincoat up the walls and over the curb. Put a small box for a niche and give it its own coat. Write TEST before TILE.



Hill first. Raincoat second. Test before pretty.

The Word Chest

Curb

The low wall you step over into a shower.

Flood test

Filling a pan with water to prove it holds before tile hides it.

Liner / pan

The old-school sheet that makes a shower basin.

Membrane

A sheet or painted coat water cannot cross.

Niche

A recessed shelf in a shower wall.

Pre-slope

The hill built under a liner so water on top of the liner still runs to the drain.

Weep holes

Small openings at a clamping drain that let water on top of a liner escape.

Turn-up

How far the raincoat climbs the wall.

Wet area

A floor or wall that will see standing or running water.

Seal to drain

The joint where the raincoat meets the drain body.

Ponding

Water that sits because the hill was not built.

Substrate

The floor or wall the work is built on.

The Builder's Promise

Craft is courage plus care. A young builder works with a grown-up until the habits are as true as the pan.

- 01** Ask an adult before using saws, live water, drain tools, or anything heavier than a backpack.
- 02** Wear closed shoes. A shower pan is slippery when it is doing its job.
- 03** Do not step in a fresh pan or on a fresh membrane.
- 04** Do not open a drain or a cleanout without an adult.
- 05** Wet saws and grinders are grown-up tools. Cardboard and a cake pan are enough for practice.
- 06** Leave the room tidier than you found it. The next person in the house is why the raincoat matters.

ASH'S LAST WORD

Tile is a hard hat. The raincoat is underneath. Hill first. Test before pretty. Keep the water where it belongs.



THE LINE IS STILL THERE

Hill first. Test before pretty.

THE TRUE LINE · A GIFT FROM VALLEY TILE · AGES 8 TO 18 · PRACTICE WITH A GROWN-UP · CHECK TWICE