

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

Laminate

WHAT IS LAMINATE FLOORING?

Laminate flooring offers a wide selection of designs that offer the look and feel of beautiful hardwood, ceramic tile and slate. It is actually a composite that's designed to endure more-than-average wear and tear. The resulting floor is a technological breakthrough. There is no staining, no fading, and no wear through.

LAMINATE FEATURES

Laminate flooring manufacturers use sophisticated, computerized technology to create realistic designs that are well protected by a tough outer coating that is impervious to most stains, spills, burns, and is extremely scratch-resistant. Laminate can be used in many settings, but is ideal for high activity rooms. These floors come in both planks and tiles and can be floated over most substrates including concrete slabs and existing floor coverings.

- Laminate flooring is incredibly durable and stain resistant. Such problem spills as nail polish, grease, and mustard simply wipe off.
- The versatility of laminate provides the realistic look of wood, tile and stone at a lower cost.
- Laminate is nearly maintenance-free. Ordinary vacuuming or sweeping is usually all it takes to keep the surface in prime condition.
- No waiting...you can walk on your floor immediately after installation is complete.

THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF LAMINATE

Glueless Laminate Flooring

Glueless installation makes these floors quick and easy-to-install. They come in a variety of ceramic and wood designs and colorations, and some manufacturers offer a real, hardwood veneer instead of a printed layer. These floors come in both planks and squares. A thin, plastic underlayment is needed to seal out moisture from below.

Laminate Flooring With Attached Underlay

These floors come with several different types of tongue and groove locking systems and an attached underlayment to reduce noise levels.

Pre-glued Laminate Flooring

No mess, because the glue is already applied to the tongue and grooves which makes these floors quick and easy-to-install. A thin, plastic underlayment is needed to seal out moisture and prevent the glue from sticking to the substrate.

LAMINATE CONSTRUCTION

There are two methods for constructing laminate flooring.

The Direct Pressure Method

With the direct pressure method, all of the layers are assembled at the same time and then heated and pressed together to form a bond. This is the most common type of laminate flooring.

The High Pressure Method

This type of laminate flooring is more often found in the expensive premium end of the laminate flooring material. It is a relatively new innovation which basically treats the top and bottom layers of laminate flooring separately, and then fuses these onto the core layer under extremely high pressure.

Laminate flooring is typically made up of four layers.

The Wear Layer

This is the surface that is walked on and is the top-most layer. It's typically made from cellulose paper that has been saturated with melamine plastic resins. This give laminate flooring its excellent durability and scratch resistance.

The Design Layer

This is what gives the laminate flooring its design, colour and characteristics. It is the image that is seen through the wear layer and is usually made from cellulose paper with a photograph or a patterned print copied onto it. As it is below the wear layer, and therefore protected, it cannot be marked, scuffed or fade.

The Core Layer

This is the main part of laminate flooring and is usually made from a type of particle board. Various strengths and thicknesses can be found, and a thicker core will be more stable. Some brands of laminate flooring have the core layer treated with water repellent chemicals, and others have Paraffin wax impregnated joints to prevent water from penetrating down into the core.

The Stabilizing Layer

This is the very bottom layer that is usually made from cellulose paper that has been saturated with melamine plastic resins, just the same as the top layer. Its purpose is to create equality on either side of the core layer so that one side isn't affected differently from the other, and thus have unnecessary movement within the boards.

Note: Most laminate floors require a plastic underlay sheet (4 mil poly) be installed directly underneath the laminate planks or tiles. This helps the floor float freely over the subfloor. Another option is to add a vapor barrier or noise reduction underlay before installing the laminate flooring.