



**WORLD FLOOR COVERING
ASSOCIATION**

Selecting a Laminate Floor

From stone to wood to ceramic tile, today's laminate floors can emulate almost any surface, making them a high demand, low cost option to the real things. Laminate floors are easy to install, easy to maintain and offer terrific resistance to stains and wear. But how do you choose which one is right for you?

What's your style?

Like the universe itself, there is no limit to the colors, textures, and finishes of laminate floors. The look and feel of rare exotic hardwoods or rich stones can be achieved thanks to a highly detailed photographic process.

A laminate floor can be used in almost any room of your home. It can be sensitive to excessive moisture, though, so a bathroom or covered patio is probably not such a good idea for this otherwise very versatile product.

Laminate is its own flooring category and possesses its own features, performance benefits and styling. You can get a laminate hardwood floor with an oil finish or hand-scraped look; long, short, wide or narrow planks; sixteen-inch square tiles or stones; bricks; even photographs that you shot yourself (should you be so inclined).

How will you install it?

Installing a new laminate floor is fast, easy and not as messy as you'd imagine. Laminate is typically floated over a level subfloor. No nails, staples, glue or tape are required. You simply leave a fraction of an inch around the perimeter of the room and click your laminate together. It locks fast and tight with almost no gaps between the pieces.

Of course, the most important component of laminate is the underlayment. Like a carpet cushion, this is the soft subfloor that acts as a moisture barrier, absorbs sound and keeps the floating floor in place.

Some newer underlayments feature antimicrobial properties to keep mold from growing, should it ever get wet under there. Some laminates come pre-attached to an underlayment padding.

AC Ratings

The European Producers of Laminate Flooring (EPLF) developed the Abrasion Ration System. They rate every laminate based on a series of tests, including Tabor Abrasion Test, impact resistance, stain resistance, burn resistance and swelling resistance. Each product is assigned an AC number. Here's what they mean:

AC1: Moderate Residential

Suitable for moderate residential use, including bedrooms and closets.

AC2: General Residential

Suitable for normal residential applications like living and dining rooms.

AC3: Heavy Residential & Moderate Commercial

Suitable for all residential applications, plus light commercial use, including hotel rooms and small offices.

AC4: General Commercial

Suitable for all residential plus general commercial applications, including offices, boutiques and cafes.

AC5: Heavy Commercial

Suitable for all residential applications plus heavy commercial applications, such as public buildings, department stores, etc.

Not all laminate flooring manufacturers go by these ratings, but most of the best ones do use the AC ratings. Look on the back of the sample boards for the AC ratings.