



WORLD FLOOR COVERING ASSOCIATION

Today's laminate floors offer realistic looking hardwoods, stones and other patterns and colors with accurate surface textures that are practically indistinguishable from the real thing.

But before you open your checkbook or slide that credit card through, here's what you need to know to make a smart buying decision.

Pricing

There isn't a whole lot of price difference between laminates. A dark hardwood laminate may cost just about the same as a marble laminate. The reason is that the manufacturing process is basically the same, regardless of style, color or type. It's a photograph that provides the decorative surface.

What does increase cost is the addition of texture to a laminate, as well as more natural looking surfaces that require a greater number of screens. These higher end laminates may cost more, but they're also more durable and often come with longer warranties.

Floating

Laminate floors are installed by using a "floating floor" system. What that means is that a padded underlayment lies between the laminate planks and the subfloor. The planks are not anchored to the subfloor, only to the edges of other planks. The result can produce a hollow sound when walked upon — and have the feeling of a slight give.

Some minor ridging or peaking where planks are joined may also occur.

Some laminate floors lock together without adhesive on the sides of the planks. These glueless laminate floors have planks that simply interlock together, which makes for easy repair if and when necessary.

Cost

“Cost per square foot” is just one component of the overall price tag for laminate flooring. Ask your retailer to calculate the total cost of your floor covering project. Here’s what he or she may include beyond the cost of the laminate, itself:

- Furniture removal/replacement
- Some retailers or installers may charge to remove (and then replace) furniture in the installation space.
- Demolition/disposal of old floor covering
- Unless your home is brand new, there’s probably an old floor covering that is going to need to be removed and properly disposed of. If you’re fortunate, it may be possible to float the new laminate floor over your existing floor..
- Sub-floor preparation
- Depending on its condition (after removal of the old floor covering), your subfloor may need to be prepped for laminate installation.
- Product delivery
- Delivering your laminate flooring may not be included in the “cost per square foot” price.
- Installation
- There will most likely be a “cost per square foot” to install your new laminate flooring.
- Materials required to complete the installation
- Additional materials may be required to properly install your laminate flooring, such as trim pieces or transitions.
- Financing
- Many retailers offer financing as an option of payment. Be sure to check the interest rate, minimum payment due and any finance charges if you choose to pay your purchase off over time.
- Ask your retailer and/or consult the manufacturer’s warranty and care guide for directions on cleaning and maintenance for your new laminate floor.