

pick the perfect floor



Everyone loves options. Too many choices, though, can quickly overwhelm someone. That's why we've made this handy dandy guide to some of the most common types of home flooring. We've asked and answered all the big questions, so you don't have to - because we're good like that. So scroll down and get started on picking the perfect flooring for your space.



Cost

1 lowest --- 5 highest



Durability

1 delicate --- 5 ding resistant



Cleaning/Maintenance

1 easiest --- 5 backbreaking



Sustainability

1 global warming --- 5 earth day

Solid Hardwood

What it is: Solid hardwood flooring is milled from a single piece of timber. It contracts and expands with the relative humidity of the space where it is laid.

Pros: Adds significant value to the home, aesthetically pleasing, easy to clean, durable, can be sanded and refinished many times, versatile, hypoallergenic.

Cons: Tends to be pricey, and although durable it is susceptible to dings and scratches, especially in high traffic areas, not pet or kid friendly, must be cleaned frequently, loud.

Where to use it: Kitchens, living areas. Avoid in areas that endure high levels of moisture.



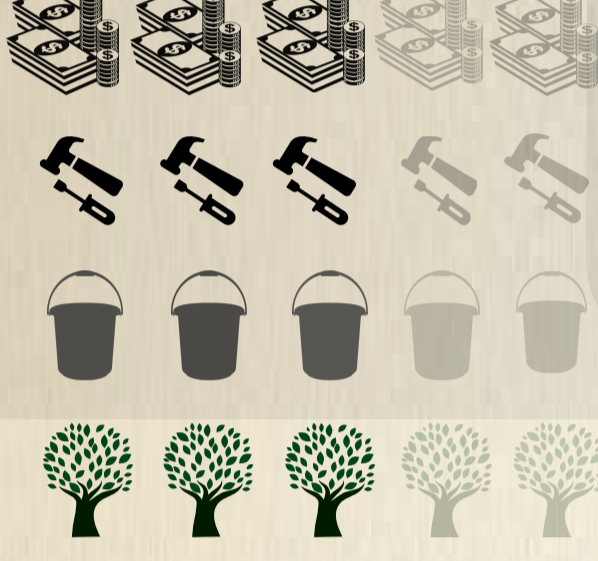
Engineered Wood

What it is: A veneer of real wood glued over a core composed of layers of wood, plywood or high density fiberboard.

Pros: More stable than solid hardwood, cheaper, more resistant to moisture and humidity and more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

Cons: The consumer has to be wary of shoddily made product. While cheaper than solid wood, it is still pricier than other flooring options. Still susceptible to fading, scratches and dings like solid wood, but cannot be sanded and refinished multiple times

Where to use it: Great for transition areas - think between a tile bath or kitchen to the rest of the house, and can be used over concrete slabs and radiant heating systems. Also, as a more eco-friendly and wallet friendly alternative where you might use solid wood floors.



Wood Look or Wood Grain Tile

What it is: Porcelain or ceramic tile imprinted with the look and surface texture of real wood flooring. New printing technology has created exceptionally authentic looking tile.

Pros: Exceptionally durable, especially the porcelain varieties. It is also easy and less costly to clean and maintain. Although less likely to be damaged, if it is, only the affected tile(s) need to be replaced versus tearing up an entire section of floor. Best of all, it is impervious to the humidity, temperature and moisture constraints of wood and other flooring materials.

Cons: Can feel quite cold and is very hard. Installation is especially tricky and its popularity has occurred relatively recently so an experienced pro is a must.

Where to use it: Pretty much anywhere you want the look of hardwood floors, especially areas that hardwood floors generally cannot go. Also a more eco-friendly and wallet friendly alternative where you might use solid wood floors.



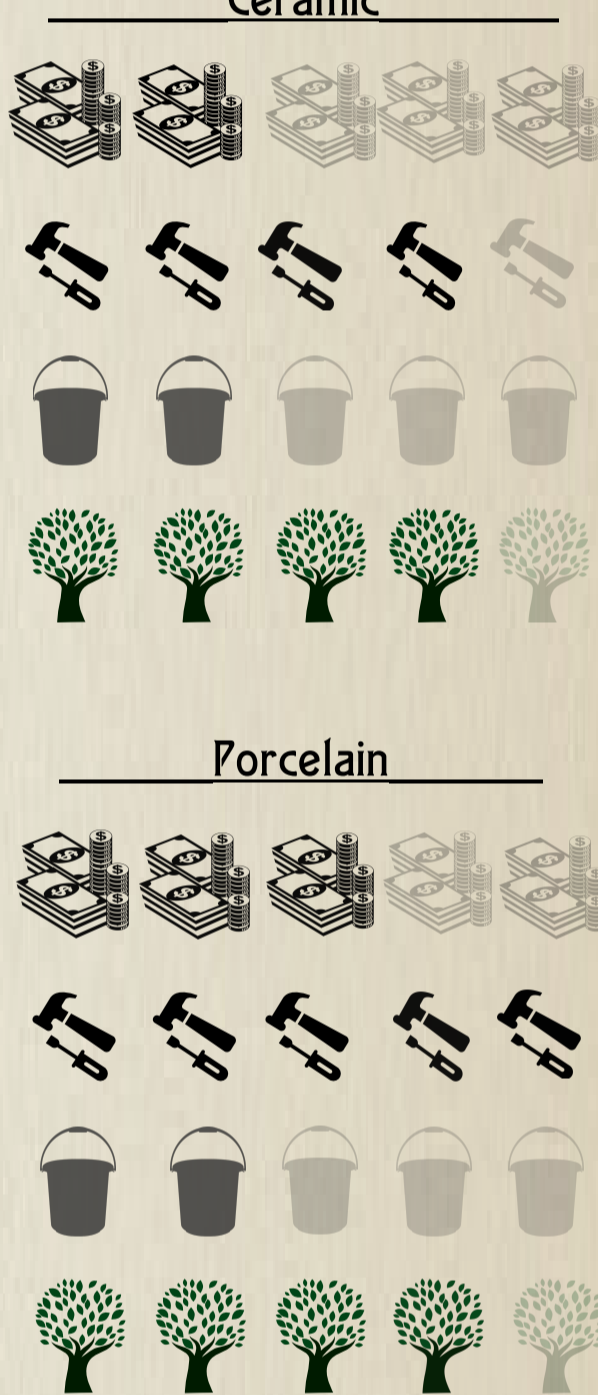
Ceramic and Porcelain Tile

What it is: Although ceramic and porcelain are often used interchangeably, they are NOT the same thing. Most tiles are made from clay or sand and other materials mixed and kiln baked and are considered ceramic. Porcelain is technically a type of ceramic tile that uses porcelain clays and made via the dust pressed method. Porcelain is much denser, durable and more water resistant.

Pros: Whether porcelain or ceramic, tile is more affordable than solid or engineered wood. Porcelain is especially durable, tile in general is very versatile, looks clean and elegant. Also easy to clean and maintain. Comes in a large variety of designs.

Cons: Not appropriate for outside use, especially ceramic. Colors, etc can vary from lot to lot so it is advisable to keep extras on hand in the event a tile is damaged. Ceramic tile is a very unforgiving, hard surface and can be susceptible to dings and chips. Porcelain is much more durable, although still exceptionally hard. While porcelain is generally superior to non porcelain ceramics, it comes with a much heftier price tag.

Where to use it: Great for higher moisture areas, especially porcelain tiles.



Vinyl

What it is: Made of synthetic material, often PVC chips formed using heat and pressure. NOT the same as linoleum. Modern vinyl flooring comes in many forms including sheets, planks and tiles and a plethora of colors and designs. Vinyl flooring is experiencing a small uptick in popularity due to this.

Pros: One of the cheapest flooring options, single pieces can be replaced if damaged, easy installation, large variety of design options, low maintenance, water resistant, comfortable/softer underfoot. Comes in stain resistant, resilient and luxury varieties.

Cons: Quality and price can vary widely. Does not add resale value to the home. Still not considered a match in beauty or durability to wood or tile. Not appropriate for outdoor applications. Negative environmental consequences including the emission of toxic compounds over time as well as dioxin when it is burned or disposed of. Made from non-renewable resources. Large carbon footprint.

Where to use it: Kitchens, bathrooms, cellars living areas. Vinyl is considered pet and small child friendly option. Sometimes vinyl is your only feasible option over an area with a lot of movement or cracks.



Linoleum

What it is: Unlike vinyl, linoleum is made from raw, all-natural, biodegradable materials (usually linseed oil and others). It was invented in 1861 and reigned supreme as a flooring option between 1900-1950. Like vinyl it now comes in sheets, planks and tiles. Currently experiencing its own surge in popularity, especially because of its huge eco-friendly advantage over vinyl.

Pros: Has natural bactericidal properties, naturally green, flexible, durable, water resistant, inexpensive, comfortable to walk and play on, can be printed to resemble almost any floor covering, installation is fairly easy, great for high traffic areas and therefore commercial buildings. Unlike vinyl, which is printed on the surface only, linoleum's color goes all the way through, which means that way, can last decades and is a great choice for use in vintage homes.

Cons: Expands and contracts, so it is not appropriate for high moisture areas like bathrooms, also can be warped from moisture in the sub-flooring, susceptible to dings and nicks.

Where to use it: Hallways, passageways, kitchens, living areas. Exceptionally pet and kid friendly. A solid choice for commercial spaces, especially hospitals, daycares, retail stores.



Carpet

What it is: A floor covering made from a thick, woven textile, cut and shaped to fit the room or laid out in "tiles."

Pros: Comes in a wide variety of colors, designs, textures and thicknesses. Warm, insulating (think energy efficient.), dulls noise, soft and comfortable underfoot. Traps up to 50% of airborne contaminants. Much safer surface for children and the elderly.

Cons: Does poorly with moisture, quality and price varies widely but padding and installation costs also need to be considered making it pricey, requires a lot of maintenance, stains easily, traps odors, easy to damage and difficult to repair, traps dirt and other allergens making it a poor choice for sensitive individuals, poor choice for homes with furry pets. Older varieties known to release VOCs (volatile organic compounds) which can carry an odor and have adverse health and environmental effects over time.

Where to use it: Living areas, bedrooms, play areas. Avoid bathrooms and other high moisture areas.

