



FASHION MEETS FUNCTION.



Just when you thought laminate couldn't get any better, manufacturers have found a way to make this flooring wonderfully different, fashion-wise.

Because technology is getting better, it is now possible to replicate stone and wood, not only to their exact color and texture but also to the special effects which make them trendy. The hand-scraped look, which is very hot for solid and engineered wood flooring, is becoming as hot as the summer season when it comes to laminate. In addition to hand-scraped and distressed looks, beveled edges, which are popular options in wood floors, are available in laminate, too.

Another evolution in laminate is plank width. The traditional width of a laminate plank is 3 inches. What's changing is the availability of wider laminate products up to 4 to 5 inches, mirroring what's going on in wood fashion.

Even though laminate flooring has come into its own as a separate flooring category, largely because of its new fashion looks and its extraordinary resistance to stains and wear, there are some advancements in things you CAN'T see that make laminate a great selection for areas of the home such as the nursery or basement playroom or office (See "Couples That Click," Page 54.) >>

Laminate has become its own fashion, witness the modern exotics look in Armstrong's Nature's Gallery® laminate plank flooring Exotics in Iroko Tawny. On the facing page is Alloc's Historic Chestnut.



What's your style? Quick-Step, top, offers Perspective® plank floor with V-grooves in Natural Oak, right is Northern Birch Classic laminate from CarpetsPlus Color Tile and bottom is Umber Hickory from Faus.



One is the underlayment, a cushiony material that absorbs sound, helps to keep the floating floor in place and acts as a moisture barrier (which is a great reason to use it below-grade!) Underlayment is purchased separately and put down like a carpet cushion or, more likely, comes pre-attached to each piece of better brand-name laminates. Many underlayments are showing up featuring antimicrobial properties which help prevent mold from growing should the back ever get wet. Although a foam material is what we traditionally see for underlayment, a version with felt padding can be purchased with an R-value to provide insulation for your floors.

When buying underlayment or laminate with pre-attached underlayment, consider purchasing the best you can afford to get the most features and benefits.

One reason for laminate's popularity is the ability to install laminate over almost any existing floor, except for carpet. (We have recently heard about laminate being installed over carpet, but manufacturers are not suggesting that it be done. One reason is that carpet's inherent springiness might defeat the dimensional stability of the laminate.) >>

MOST OF TODAY'S LAMINATE FLOORING IS GLUELESS, ALTHOUGH MORE PRE-GLUED LAMINATE OPTIONS ARE BEING SHOWN.

A pre-glued product is one in which the glue is embedded in the tongue and can be activated by adding water, and this option is favored in areas where the product may get wet so a stronger joint is needed.

Even though laminate is touted as a do-it-yourself product, here's a word of caution. The details of a finished floor spell the difference between a laminate that looks like it was done by a professional or an amateur. The most important finishing details are typically trim, transitions and other moldings. Although moldings conceal the expansion joints between the floors and walls and soften the transition between the floors and the walls, they also function as "picture framing" for the floor. Also, your floor may require even more specialty items such as vents or stair nosing, critical elements that make sure your floor is what you expected.

With summer here you may want to spruce up your existing laminate floor. For dark woods you may want to lighten up the room for the summer; consider a brass (pewter) easel or another favorite metal in the room with a summery painting — nature, flowers, grasses or the ocean — to move the eye off the floor and give the room a lighter airy feeling. Add metal pots with tall grasses or silk flowers.

Conversely, if your floors are light, you may just want to add contrast to the room. In this case for summer, dark can be fine as long as it is not on the floor. In your bedroom consider a spread full of outdoor colors 🌿



Spruce up your home for any season with a new color, shade or tone. Compare the rooms on the facing page with other seasonal moods created by Pergo's Accolade Oak, Blocked, top, and BHK's Lifestyle in Natural Apple.

