

Flooring Decision – Pros and Cons

A popular design trend is to use the same flooring throughout the entire house, or at least throughout the public areas. That makes the rooms look bigger and provides a unified look. But you wouldn't want to use hardwood or carpet in a bathroom or mudroom, where tile, vinyl or linoleum would be a better choice.

You also need to consider comfort. Carpet, laminate and cork are more comfortable to stand on than tile, for example, and they're also more comfortable to fall on – a potential concern for elderly people or families with toddlers. Hardwood falls in the middle on the comfort scale.

Tile will last forever under normal conditions, but carpet and laminate may need replacement in ten years or less. Hardwood, properly maintained, can last for decades, but it may require more maintenance than other flooring options.

To help you make your flooring decision, here are the pros and cons for five popular types of flooring. Costs

are also included, but they are extremely rough estimates because the costs of both materials and installation vary widely, depending on where you live and the choices you make. Costs to remove old flooring are not included, and some homes may require additional construction for some floor types. Installing new flooring often requires replacing the baseboard trim as well. We used HomeAdvisor.com and Fixr.com as sources for labor and material costs.

HARDWOOD

Pros: Hardwood is durable and attractive. If it's scratched it can be resanded and refinished many times. It will last the lifetime of the house if it doesn't get too wet.

Cons: Hardwood requires regular maintenance and can warp with moisture. It needs to be refinished periodically. It also needs a subfloor installed.

Cost: \$3 to \$14 per square foot for material, plus \$3 to \$8 per square foot per installation, for a total cost of \$6 to \$22 per square foot.



ENGINEERED HARDWOOD

Pros: Less expensive than hardwood, engineered hardwood comes prefinished and is easier to install. It works better with heated floors and is less susceptible to moisture damage. Doesn't require a subfloor.

Cons: Can only be refinished a few times.

Cost: \$3 to \$13 per square foot for material, plus \$3 to \$10 per square foot for installation, for a total of \$6 to \$23 per square foot.

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