

Decorating Your Home

The Bottom Line On Floor Coverings For Your Home

(NAPSA)—Knowing more about flooring may help you hit the ground running when it comes to shopping for floor coverings.

The most important consideration is to tailor the floor choice to the people who use it, according to the World Floor Covering Association. Will kids or pets increase wear and tear? Is comfort important, as in a kitchen where you are usually on your feet for long periods? There are new and elegant choices available you may not have considered the last time you bought new flooring.

The choice of flooring must include practical considerations, such as cost, usage and style preferences. Carpets, for example, are soft and comfortable to tread on with bare feet but can become damaged quickly in damp conditions such as a steamy bathroom. Materials such as vinyl, while not as long-lasting as natural substances, are inexpensive and easy to replace when worn.

All surfaces have advantages and disadvantages—depending upon your situation. It's important to think through your needs. For example, hard surfaces such as natural stone or hardwood are classic and can add elegance to any room. While harder surfaces can amplify sound, this can be muted by using area rugs or creative insets of carpeting. Surfaces such as tile, vinyl and linoleum can sustain a lot of wear and do well in areas with high moisture. The key is to identify each space's unique characteristics and needs. That will guide you in the selection of materials right for each space.

Here are some points to consider from the association's Web



Photo courtesy of Mannington Mills, Inc.

Flooring plays an important role in whether a room is cheery or dark, formal or casual, traditional or modern.

site at www.wfca.org:

- Consider whether the floor covering material that you select will complement the furniture and other objects that will be in the room. Do not forget to take into account the floor in adjacent rooms. Too many changes of finish from one room to the next in a small house can appear fussy.
- No matter how good the flooring you choose, incorrect installation will result in an uneven surface that will wear badly. Always have flooring installed professionally.
- Plain colored flooring shows marks more quickly than floors with a patterned surface.
- If you are planning neutral-colored walls to create a feeling of space, consider a natural-colored floor to add warmth.
- Busy or large-scale floor patterns may overpower the rest of the room.
- Under-floor heating (radiant heat) is compatible with most types of hard flooring, particularly

ceramic, stone and well-seasoned hardwood.

- Consider the cost of installing the floor as well as the purchase price of materials. Most retailers will be willing to estimate your costs with or without installation.

- The amount of day-to-day maintenance you are willing to undertake may influence your floor choice. Some materials, such as wood, require more care, especially around a sink, where water can damage the varnish.

- You can get flooring ideas from visiting model homes or looking through home or decorating magazines. If you see a look that you find appealing, jot down the information or clip the picture to share with your retailer.

Before shopping for flooring:

Draw a simple diagram of the room(s) and indicate where entrances are located.

Measure and write down both the width and length of the room(s). Include closets or other areas that will need flooring. Most retailers will want to re-measure just to insure they order the right amount of product.

Make a note of the color schemes and flooring types in adjoining rooms.

Determine how much natural sunlight enters the room, which direction the room faces, and any sliding patio doors.

If possible, find out what is under the existing flooring.

Whenever possible, take samples of any fabrics, paints or wallpapers used in the space.