

Flooring Type & Basic Care



Asphalt tile & Rubber

With a wide variety of floor materials in use today, it is important to recognize the special characteristics of every type. The following chart will enable you to recognize certain flooring, provide for their care and identify any special precautions you should take.

ASPHALT TILE

A mixture of asbestos fibers, pigments and inert fillers together with an asphalt or resin binder. The components are mixed, heated, then rolled out in sheets and cut to size. The colors of asphalt tile are divided into four groupings, with "A" being the darkest. "A" and "B" usually contain asphalt binders while "C" and "D" contain resin binders. Asphalt tile is also furnished in a grade designated as grease-proof.

Features

- * long-wearing
- * bright colors
- * attractive appearance when properly maintained
- * low-cost
- * can be used in sub-ground levels

Precautions

- * avoid oils and solvents
- * do not install in areas subject to extreme temperatures

Recommended Products

- * polymer-type water emulsion finish
- * wax-type water emulsion finish
- * safe floor cleaner

RUBBER

A mixture of rubber - natural, synthetic and/or reclaimed - with inert fillers and color pigments. The raw materials are mixed, heated and rolled out under pressure. The strips of rubber are then cut to size. Rubber flooring varies widely in form and properties and is available in tiles and sheets, with different degrees of hardness and flexibility.

Features

- * highly resilient and easy underfoot
- * variety of plain or mottled colors
- * dense, smooth surface
- * resists abrasives, stains, acids and mild alkalies
- * quiet, anti-slip, durable

Precautions

- * avoid oils and solvents
- * do not install in areas of bright sunlight

Vinyl & Linoleum

Recommended Products

- * polymer-type water emulsion finish
- * wax-type water emulsion finish
- * safe floor cleaner

VINYL

Vinyl resins are used as the binding agent. May be any one of the following general classifications:

* vinyl asbestos tile - comparable to asphalt tile, except that vinyl-type resins are the binder. Contains asbestos, pigments and inert fillers and is somewhat more flexible, resilient and stain resistant than asphalt tile

* homogenous flexible vinyl tile - comparable to rubber tile, although it has less filler and inert pigment. Some flexible vinyl is laminated to a backing material such as cork or a coarser vinyl flooring

* calendered vinyl flooring - comparable to conventional inlaid linoleum, except that the oxidized drying oils are replaced by a vinyl resin and plasticizer. It is available either in tile or yard goods form

Features

- * durable, long-wearing
- * bright and attractive in color
- * resistant to acids, alkalies, grease, oil, soil and marking
- * resilient and easy to walk on

Precautions

- * susceptible to scratching - requires wax or floor finish for protection, economy and beauty

Recommended Products

- * polymer-type water emulsion finish
- * wax-type water emulsion finish
- * solvent cleaning and polishing wax
- * safe floor cleaner

LINOLEUM

Mixture of ground cork, wood flour, resins, color pigments and oxidized linseed oil or combinations of drying oils. The ingredients are mixed, rolled out and compressed onto asphalt-saturated felt, jute, burlap or other backing. Heat is applied to the mixture during compression, which fuses and sets the oils and resins to form strong binding agents. This is heat-cured to form the finished product.

Features

- * durable, long-lasting if properly maintained
- * quiet and comfortable under foot
- * economical and easy to lay

Mastic & Cork

Precautions

- * avoid unsafe cleaners
- * avoid use of varnish or lacquer sealing compounds

Recommended Products

- * polymer-type water emulsion finish
- * wax-type water emulsion finish
- * solvent cleaning and polishing wax
- * safe floor cleaner

MASTIC

Similar to asphalt tile in composition, but it is heated on the job and troweled onto the floor to create a seamless flooring. Has an appearance similar to that of an asphalt roadway.

Features

* frequently used as an installation over old, worn, and cracked concrete in order to give a new, long-wearing and more resilient surface

Precautions

- * avoid oils and solvents
- * avoid installation in areas of extreme temperatures

Recommended Products

- * polymer-type water emulsion finish
- * wax-type water emulsion finish
- * safe floor cleaner

CORK

Ground cork bark is molded and compressed. The natural resins in the cork, or added resins, serve to bring the mass together when heat-cured under hydraulic pressure. Different shades of color are obtained by altering the baking temperatures. Cork is available in tile or sheet form. It may or may not be waxed or otherwise factory finished.

Features

- * resilient, easy to walk on
- * durable
- * soft, natural beauty
- * will not dust, crumble, splinter or rot
- * warm under foot
- * safe

Precautions

- * avoid excessive use of water

Wood & Tile

Recommended Products

- * penetrating floor sealer (unless cork is factory-finished)
- * solvent cleaning and polishing wax
- * polymer or wax-type water emulsion finish on well-sealed floors only
- * safe floor cleaner on well-sealed floors only

WOOD, INCLUDING GYM FLOORS

The wood floors in common use may be either soft woods or hard woods in a variety of widths, thicknesses and designs. They may be either open or closed grain; maple is an example of a closed grain and oak depicts an open grain. Strip flooring is generally nailed to a wooden sub-floor, while the square block type is generally laid in mastic on top of the sub-floor.

Features

- * combines beauty and warmth
- * when worn, can be reconditioned by sanding and refinishing
- * easy to maintain

Precautions

- * be sure floor is properly sealed, as water on an unsealed surface will raise grain and roughen
- * avoid excessive use of water which may seep through joints, causing floor to rot, buckle or warp
- * never wax or apply an acrylic floor finish
- * wash floors only with a diluted ammonia solution or neutral cleaner
- * do not use soap or a detergent based cleaner, as they leave a film
- * damp mopping is the fastest and most efficient way to clean your hardwood floors

Recommended Products

- * (see CORK above)

TILE (CLAY AND CERAMIC) FLOORS

A mixture of clay and water that has been shaped and fired in a kiln at high temperature. Clay is basically aluminum silicate. There are many different types of tile due to the various coloring processes, methods of firing and special manufacturing techniques. The surface of tiles may be either glazed or unglazed. Glazed tiles have an impervious glassy layer on the surface which is different from the tile body. Unglazed tiles are alike throughout. The tiles are set in cement to form the floor.

Features

- * durable and long-lasting
- * offers a variety of color and design
- * easy to care for when properly maintained

Precautions

- * avoid unsafe cleaners that will eat away the cement grouting surrounding the tile

Marble & Magnesite

Recommended Products

- * solvent-type terrazzo sealer finish
- * polymer or wax-type water emulsion finish (to cured and neutralized floors only)
- * solvent cleaning and polishing wax
- * safe floor cleaner

MARBLE

Marble is essentially calcium carbonate which has been changed by nature through pressure, heat and water into crystalline form. The beautiful colors in marble are as a result of impurities.

Features

- * character and beauty
- * extremely dense and durable
- * easy to maintain
- * while they stain easily, they also feature easy stain removal characteristics

Precautions

- * avoid staining - oils, grease, dyes, etc.
- * avoid cleaners that leave a soap build-up
- * avoid acidic cleaners, ammonia, metals, oils and other abrasives

Recommended Products

- * solvent-type terrazzo sealer finish
- * damp mop with a neutral cleaner

MAGNESITE

The binder is magnesium oxychloride which is formed while laying the floor when magnesium oxide is combined with a strong solution of magnesium chloride. Various fillers are added to this binder. These materials are mixed together and troweled onto the floor and allowed to set for a period ranging from 18 to 72 hours.

Features

* the variety of fillers used results in floors with a wide range of appearances, durability and resilience

Precautions

- * avoid unsafe, abrasive cleaners
- * seal to prevent dusting

Recommended Products

- * polymer or wax-type water emulsion finish (to cured and neutralized floors only)

Terrazzo & Concrete

TERRAZZO

A polished surface floor consisting of marble or granite chips mixed with a Portland cement matrix. The mixture is troweled onto the floor and leveled out and allowed to cure for a period of 5 to 6 days. The surface is then ground with an abrasive stone grinder and polished.

Features

- * combines the beauty of marble with the strength of concrete
- * easy to maintain
- * lasts a lifetime if properly installed and cared for
- * cool in summer and warm in winter

Precautions

- * avoid unsafe cleaners that will eat the concrete matrix away from the marble chip
- * seal to prevent dusting and staining
- * avoid acids
- * avoid powdered cleansers, alkaline agents, steel wool or strong acids

Recommended Products

- * solvent-type terrazzo sealer finish
- * polymer or wax-type water emulsion finish (to cured and neutralized floors only)
- * a regular buffing program helps restore the natural sheen of the stone

CONCRETE

A mixture of Portland cement with sand, gravel and water which is poured and sets as a solid mass due to a chemical reaction of the cement with water.

Features

- * low cost
- * extremely durable

Precautions

- * seal to prevent dusting
- * avoid unsafe cleaners and acids

Recommended Products

- * solvent-type penetrating floor sealer (on cured and neutralized floors only)
- * polymer or wax-type water emulsion finish (on cured and neutralized floors only)
- * solvent cleaning and polishing wax
- * safe floor cleaner

Asbestos Flooring

Asbestos describes six naturally occurring fibrous minerals found in certain rock formations. When mined and processed, asbestos is separated into thin fibers. When these fibers are present in the air they are invisible to the naked eye. Asbestos fibers are mixed with a mineral which binds them together so they can be used in many products. When a product breaks down asbestos fibers can be released into the air, remaining there for several hours and causing health problems for those who inhale them.

Asbestos in Your Building

Because of its special insulation and fire retardant qualities, asbestos is used in many products in commercial and residential buildings, including flooring. When added to vinyl tiles or used as a backing, asbestos strengthens the flooring laid down and makes it more resistant to scratching, scuffing and humidity.

How Dangerous is Asbestos?

Excessive exposure to inhaled asbestos particles can lead to health problems, although the risks are generally higher when exposure occurs while handling asbestos in the work environment. Asbestos fibers are not harmful until released into the air. New products on the market containing asbestos possess a "locked-in" feature, which prevents fibers from being released into the air.

The use of asbestos-based products today pose virtually no health risk. The only precautions that should be taken are to prevent damage when handling the products or materials. However, asbestos-based materials and floor coverings in your home are better left alone, to prevent the release of particles into the environment.

Tests have shown that vinyl-asbestos flooring releases only minute quantities of asbestos fiber into the air. However, care should be taken to avoid sanding or stripping, or any other operation that may damage the flooring. The risk of fiber inhalation is greatest when repairing or removing asbestos flooring. Tasks of this nature should be performed by a professional with the appropriate equipment.

Precautions

- * when removing material, minimize risk by removing in pieces as large as possible
- * wet the materials that are being removed place all discarded materials into protective bags
- * NEVER use a vacuum cleaner to pick up dust, as they can contaminate your vacuum and also become airborne
- * clean the area with mops or sponges, repeat and clean off mops in a sink or basin with a drain
- * NEVER sand a floor containing asbestos and avoid tearing or ripping

Major renovation projects should, at the very least, require the consultation of a contractor. Unless absolutely necessary due to deterioration, asbestos flooring is best left alone. When working with asbestos, use all precautions and protective clothing.

Lead Abatement

Inorganic lead has been identified as the number one environmental pollutant and threat to public health in North America.

As a result of industrialization lead is prevalent in the environment. It is toxic to humans, particularly to children. They may be permanently impaired by significant lead exposure, which can occur in various manufacturing processes, general environmental exposure and lead contaminated soil, water, surface dust and food.

Health Problems

- * asbestosis (a fibrous scarring of the lungs)
- * lung cancer
- * mesothelioma (a cancer of the lining of the chest or abdominal cavity - it could be years before symptoms show up)

The appropriate government agencies can assist in lead inspection and hazard assessment at the worksite. Training programs are also available at the government level and may be available in-house.

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