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5 THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN BUYING A WATER-SAFE FLOOR

Waterproof flooring is the fastest growing flooring segment as many homes and families are realizing the benefits of a durable and beautiful flooring surface they can trust and afford.

However, with so many waterproof floors competing with each other, many brands use confusing and proprietary marketing strategies. This makes it hard for homeowners to understand the differences between floors and decide what is best for their home.

If you are shopping for a waterproof floor for your home or business, there are five things you should consider to help you make the best choice.

This guide will help clear up the confusion around terms and materials you may see.

It's all part of our commitment to make flooring simple. No confusing marketing, just the facts to give you the clarity you need to make the best decision.

WATERPROOF?

TYPES

LOOK

THINGS TO CONSIDER

DURABHHAY INSTALLATION

1. WHAT DOES A "WATERPROOF" FLOOR MEAN, EXACTLY?

If you believe most marketing for waterproof flooring, you may be convinced that your floor could survive a tsunami or Biblical flood. It's true that "waterproof" floors are designed to be much less susceptible to damage caused by moisture than a real wood floor.

However, water can cause all sorts of problems that may still cause you to replace your flooring.

MOST FLOORS ARE TECHNICALLY MADE TO BE WATER RESISTANT, NOT WATERPROOF.

THIS IS WHY WE RECOMMEND THINKING OF "WATERPROOF" FLOORS AS "WATER-SAFE."

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR WATERPROOF FLOOR

^WATER-SAFE



1. Check the product's warranty. Most floors are technically made to be water resistant, not waterproof.

2. Small spills and splashes are nothing to worry about. Just mop them up and carry on!



3. More serious water issues (like a leaking dish washer, broken water line, or flooded basement) may require removing your flooring to allow your subfloor to dry out. Or possibly replace your floor altogether.



4. Even if a floor is sold as 100% waterproof, including the locking mechanism, it is still possible for water to reach the perimeter of your floor and seep under the boards onto your subfloor.



5. If any water gets underneath your flooring either through the perimeter or through the locking mechanism, mold can grow unnoticed, if the flooring is not removed to allow the subfloor to properly dry out.

2. TYPES OF WATER-SAFE FLOORS

Before covering the details of what you should consider when buying a "waterproof" floor, let's first cover the types you're likely to see. In general, waterproof floors come in these formats:



SHEET VINYL

LOOSE LAY VINYL



RIGID CORE VINYL

LAMINATE

GLUE DOWN SHEET VINYL

These floors are great for large spaces and commercial applications as they can be purchased and installed at very low cost. Sheet vinyl usually comes in 6' or 12' rolls and usually needs to have adhesive fully spread across the subfloor.

While sheet vinyl has excellent water resistant properties, it will conform to the subfloor as it is rolled out. Any imperfections or unevenness in the subfloor may show after the floor has been installed.



Loose lay floors are formatted as planks or tiles without a locking mechanism that can be installed without adhesive, or only using adhesive around the perimeter of the floor. These floors are usually thicker than glue down vinyl floors and allow for better embossing and texturing for a more natural wood, tile, or stone look.

Installation is quick and planks or tiles can be removed and replaced easily after installation. Some loose lay vinyl floors have peel and stick adhesive that can be used on floors or as wall coverings.

RIGID CORE VINYL

Rigid core is a broad term that can cover many different types of materials. These can include wood composite, stone composite, mineral composite and other types of dense, rigid materials that give planks and tiles better durability.

Rigidness allows these floors to be installed over subfloors or even existing floor coverings without telegraphing imperfections. Rigid core floors usually have a click lock mechanism that requires no adhesive.

There are many possibilities for rich, natural textures and rigid core floors are very stable and durable. Some can even include a real wood top layer to combine the benefits of real hardwood with the water resistance and easy installation of rigid core flooring.

LAMINATE

You may be surprised to see laminate on this list, but laminate is becoming increasingly popular for a waterproof option. And for good reason!

As technology has advanced, many laminate floors are designed with dense HDF cores that give more water protection and durability than old laminate floors. Laminate floors can feature a watertight locking mechanism, preventing water from seeping through the seams.

Another advance made in recent years is better finishes that can withstand more wear and spills.

DOES IT HAVE A BUILT-IN PAD?

Another factor to consider when looking at a vinyl or laminate floor is whether or not it has a built-in pad attached to the back. Most rigid core flooring requires or strongly recommends a foam or cork underlayment be rolled out on the subfloor before installing the flooring.

Many times floors are being sold with this type of pad already attached to the back of the boards. Looking for this option can save you time and money.

3. LOOK

How your floor looks in your home is in many ways the first thing to consider when shopping for a floor. Even though waterproof floors can be very affordable, it is still a major purchase and a big project to replace flooring in your home or business. You want to love the look of your floor long after it is installed.

Most vinyl floors have a computer printed image or film on top of the vinyl or composite core. For wood-look floors, there are many features that can enhance the visual image of a waterproof floor.

FEATURES TO LOOK FOR:

- Wide widths can fill a large space and make a big room feel more cozy.
- Embossing and texturing can give a more natural look and feel to a floor.
 Some floors have texture that follows the grain in the image for an even more realistic look.
- Painted bevels can help planks appear more realistic.
- Multiple images or color tones can reduce the repeating patterns that are often found in waterproof flooring.
- Less pattern repeat makes for a more realistic natural wood-look.
- Multiple lengths also help breakup repeating patterns compared to vinyl floors that have fixed lengths.

TAKE A SAMPLE HOME

Be sure to look at samples and room scenes of waterproof floors when shopping. We also recommend you take a sample home and look at it in the lighting of your home to get a better idea of what your flooring will appear like.

When it comes to flooring, it is worth taking the time to make a decision you will be comfortable with for a long time.



4. DURABILITY

One of the primary features of water-safe flooring is the resiliency and durability they have compared to natural wood or tile floors. Homeowners love that vinyl and laminate can stand up to foot and pet traffic, and are easy to clean and maintain.

PRIMARY FEATURES THAT AFFECT DURABILITY



Overall thickness: usually measured in millimeters (mm), thicker floors will be more dense, less prone to telegraphing subfloor imperfections, and will also be heavier and have less of a bounce or hollow sound when walked on.

Wear layer: usually measured in mils (ex: 20mil), the thicker a floor's wear layer the more it will be protected from foot and pet traffic. Keep in mind, the one drawback of vinyl flooring is that it cannot be refinished like a natural wood floor. A thick wear layer will protect your investment.

Other features: anti-stain and anti-scratch, or ceramic finish additives can further increase the durability of your floor.

5. INSTALLATION

How you install your water-safe floor is an important factor in what floor you choose to buy – especially if you might be installing it yourself.

Depending on the type of flooring you are considering, your floor may need to be glued down, partially glued down, or "floated" with no adhesive at all.

Floating floors are the simplest to install since you don't need to buy glue. Rigid core vinyl flooring and laminate flooring usually is made with a click lock mechanism that allows you to lock boards together.



Some locking mechanisms are harder to work with than others and can result in broken boards that have to be thrown away.

It's a good idea if you are DIYing to have the locking mechanism demonstrated to you in a store before you take it home and start your project.

YOUR WATER-SAFE FLOOR IS ONLY AS GOOD AS ITS INSTALLATION.

Here's a couple things you can do to make sure water won't be a problem.

- Apply a moisture barrier to the subfloor. To find out what's best for your project, consult the retailer you're buying from and the manufacturer's instructions.
- Install the floor well! For glue-down floors, make sure you use the right glue and apply it correctly. For loose lay and click-lock, make sure the boards fit together well. Watch for gaps!

MAKING A DECISION

The truth is that water-safe floors are a great flooring option for many homes.

Keeping these 5 things in mind will help you avoid being confused by marketing terms and help you make the best decision for your home.



FLOORS