

M.Austin Floors:

## SELECTION TIPS

Flooring can be one of the most influential elements in a room. A sisal will create a relaxed, outdoorsy feel, a wilton has a warmer but more formal effect. Stone can invoke either heritage or cutting edge style, and hardwood both tradition and grandeur. No matter which flooring material you choose, your selection will determine how much it will contribute to both the personality and value of your home.

### Choose Your Source Wisely

The first step in shopping for flooring products is to find the right source. A well-established business specializing in flooring is best to insure knowledge, skill and high quality products. A flooring specialist has the expertise to guide you to the best value in your price range. Shop at a discount store and you'll find "discount" products you may have to replace sooner than you'd expect, incurring additional installation costs as well as materials.

### Do Your Homework

Since most flooring is sold by the square foot or yard, it is helpful to measure the space. If your room is not a simple rectangle, draw a diagram, with dimensions. Include closets, built-ins, fireplaces and doorways.

Before you go shopping, take a good look at the space. What is under your current flooring? Is your space naturally well-lit? What kind of traffic does it endure? Bring along pillows or fabric samples if you have them.

### Full Selection is Important

Look for a large and varied selection of carpets with different fiber and weave options. Wool, synthetics, sisal, woven vinyl and even paper all have their own looks. Wiltons, Axminsters, tufted carpets, machine and hand-loomed area rugs have their own strengths. A variety of patterns is helpful too, to stimulate your imagination and provide options. A good selection will inspire you!

### Fiber Facts

The more tightly twisted the fiber, the more abrasion it will withstand. The longer the fiber, the less shedding. Test by digging your fingertips into the pile and dragging them across the surface. If you pull up a bunch of carpet fibers, the

staples are too short; the carpet won't retain its density. Notice how the yarn feels: a good quality yarn will feel soft, not coarse and dry.

### Synthetics are Trying to be Wool

Wool stays beautiful for years naturally. It is an extremely durable, crimped fiber, which springs back into shape after you walk on it, so matted-down paths won't develop as readily. Wool's natural coating makes it stain resistant and easy to clean, and the scale-like configuration of its fibers helps to keep soil on the surface so it is easy to vacuum or blot up. Moreover, wool accepts dye readily, enabling pure and clear reproduction of every color imaginable.

### Synthetics are Better Than Ever

Synthetics have enjoyed recent advances that have produced some very high quality carpet fibers which are stain and crush resistant, reliably color-fast, and "de-lustered"; for a more matte finish. The best are "Wear-Dated", guaranteeing their durability. Look for premium branded products such as Tactesse, Dupont Stainmaster and Anso Crush Resister III.

The biggest advantage of synthetics can be their affordability. However, a good value in wool can sometimes be less expensive than a high-end synthetic.

### Consider the Texture

Cut pile carpets such as velvets (short pile) and plushes (longer pile) are elegant, but they show footprints readily. Choose a berber or a wilton to avoid this, or a cut and loop pile, a very popular and forgiving choice with a mixture of loops and cut pile which hides most everything.

### Be Careful on Stairs

Stairs are the most demanding application, which requires a strong, dense and stable pile. Wool is ideal for stairs and high traffic areas because of its strength and resilience. Woven carpet is best because the backing keeps the yarn in place. Cut pile is preferable to looped, as the spaces between the loops are more likely to open up on the edge of the steps. Density is also important. Try to separate the rows of fibers: can you feel the foundation? If so, the carpet may not be dense enough for use on stairs. A wool Axminster weave is the ultimate choice for stairs because it has a dense, cut pile and a woven backing to keep the yarns in place.

### Seams Won't Be Invisible

An experienced installer will be skilled at making seams less visible, but it is likely you will be able to see the seams if you look for them - they will not be invisible.

Ask your installer about hiding seams under furniture or in the least obvious place. Most carpet is 12 feet wide, so at least one seam will be necessary if your room is wider. In some cases you'll have a choice: you can purchase less carpet and piece it together or purchase more carpeting to avoid the need for extra seams. Ask about your options, or your installer may make these decisions for you.

### Firm Padding

For padding, we recommend 40-ounce fibercore, made of reconstituted carpet and pad. It is a firm non-allergenic pad; it won't mold, mildew or mat down, and is guaranteed for 20 years, even when you change the carpeting. For those who prefer more cushion, pure solid rubber (not the compressed foam type) is very good, but more expensive than fibercore. We do not recommend anything softer since a pad that is too flexible will allow the carpet to stretch.

### Come in and Talk to Us!

The best way for us to help you is to meet with you in person. We encourage you to come into our store to see our vast selection and to tell us about what you seek. We'll help you find the products best suited for your individual needs. If you would like to have an in-home consultation, please call us at 858.483.3200. We look forward to being of further assistance!

### Be Practical about Color

Off-whites are by far the best-selling carpet colors, but they're most appropriate in light traffic areas. For heavy-use areas, consider taupe or mushroom, which are light, but don't show soil as readily.

Patterned or textured carpets are good at camouflaging footprints, soil and stains. Even a slight variation in carpet color or texture is helpful.

Dark carpet in a light room can give the illusion of depth and make your ceilings seem higher. However, light-colored lint and pet hair will be very noticeable.

### Natural Wood

Wood provides natural character and adds long-lasting value to a home. It comes in many species, finishes and colors and is a comfortable, natural insulator. We offer wood in strips, planks, and parquet, in pre-finished and un-finished versions.

Wood should be sealed or finished in moist areas and is not suitable for installation below ground level. Solid wood strip or plank is nailed down only and requires a wood sub floor, but solid wood parquet can be glued to a variety of sub floor materials.

### Engineered Wood

Engineered wood is a veneer layer of wood with a multi-layered backing criss-crossed beneath. It looks and feels like solid wood but is easier and less expensive to install. It is a good choice for below-grade installations as its laminated construction adds stability. Offered in pre-finished strips and planks, it can usually be refinished at least once, if done by a professional.

Engineered strip, plank and parquet can be glued down over various types of sub-flooring, but if nailed, it must be over a wood sub-floor.

### Laminates

Laminates are synthetic look-alikes for wood and stone. They are durable and stain-resistant, and easy to install, even below grade. Their hollow sound may be considered to be a disadvantage and their surface cannot be refinished. Some manufacturers discourage installation of their products in damp areas such as bathrooms.

### Ceramic Tiles

It is important to choose the appropriate tile for use. Some tiles can be installed indoors or out, while many cannot. Some tiles will withstand high traffic and heavy wear, while some are durable enough only for use on counters and walls. Ask about slip-resistance if this is important in your application.

Ceramic tiles come in many colors, styles, patterns and degrees of sheen. Light colors and larger-sized tiles will make your room appear larger, while darker, smaller tiles can make a room seem smaller and cozier. With any flooring, bring samples home and see how they look in both daytime and night.

Glazed tiles are easy to clean and stain-resistant as opposed to unglazed. Grout color is also very important: white or light grouts are hard to keep clean. Selecting a darker grout will save you considerable time on maintenance, but all grout will need periodic sealing.

Tiles must be installed on a very stable subfloor since any movement may result in cracking.

## Stone

Natural stone comes in a wide variety of types and colors. It adds texture and character as well as value to your home. Stone floors can last a lifetime, but the more porous types require care, including periodic sealing against stains.

In any natural material, there will be considerable variation in color, consistency and pattern. This variation is part of what makes wood and stone both natural and beautiful.