

Selecting New Flooring

Shopping for a new flooring can be confusing, and frustrating if you are not prepared. To help you shop for flooring, review the following tips:

Review the project area

1. Before making a trip to your local flooring store:
 - Draw a simple outline of the room(s) and where the room entrances are located.
 - Carefully measure the room(s) you want to cover with new flooring. Use a metal measuring tape and write down both the width and the length of the room(s). Be sure to include the closets and other areas that will need new flooring.
 - Make a note of what are the adjoining rooms and what flooring is currently used in those areas.
 - Make a note about how much natural sunlight enters in the room, which direction the room faces, and any sliding door patio doors.
 - If possible, make a note of what is under the existing flooring? (Sometimes if you have an forced-air heating system with in-floor heating ducts you can pull up the heat vent cover and look inside to get an idea at to what is really underneath your existing flooring).
2. Whenever possible, take along any furniture wallpaper, and drapery fabrics from the room.
3. Decide what you want done with existing baseboard and moldings.

What to ask yourself

4. Think about answers to these questions to help you select the right floor for your needs:
 - How much traffic does this room get each day?
 - What is the room used for?
 - How many children and pets do you have?
 - Do you have certain color in mind?
 - What are your personal expectations for the flooring? How long do you want it to last?

What to ask the retailer?

5. Be sure to ask if the price quoted includes:
 - all subfloor preparation
 - all installation costs
 - removal of existing flooring, if needed
 - moving of all furniture and appliances
 - all necessary materials for installing your new floor
6. Ask about the installers:
 - - Are they independent mechanics, or do they work in the store?
 - Ask whose insurance covers installation errors
 - Ask if all the installation materials are the manufacturer's recommended products, so the warranty will not be voided.

7. Before choosing a floor have the salesperson review with you the manufacturer's warranty information as well as the manufacturer's care and maintenance procedures. Keep a copy of both brochures for your reference.

8. Be sure to get all quotes in writing, including amount of flooring needed, and a rough diagram on how they will install the flooring and where all seams will fall.

9. Be sure to understand who is responsible for removing toilets, portable dishwashers, and any other fixed room fixtures.

10. If the flooring store has a web site, you may want to check it out give you some idea of what kind of store they are. Make a note of what groups, or organizations they may be associated with. You might even try to setup an appointment with them, via e-mail, to save you valuable time when you get to their store.

11. Always get all product information in writing including the manufacturer's name, product name, style, color, and how the product will be installed.

Carpet Shopping: What to look for

In the market for a new carpet? Be sure to check out the performance characteristics to ensure you chose a carpet that will hold up well and have a long life.

There are several things to look for, including a twist in each individual yarn. Several qualities give performance, including the density of the carpet. Density should not be confused with the height of the pile. Pile height has nothing to do with the performance. Generally the more twist in the carpet yarns, the more spring, which hides footprints.

Other properties to look for are stain and soil protection, and static resistance. Most homeowners clean their carpets about once a year, so in the interim, you want the carpet to perform as well as possible in these three areas.

The carpet industry had done some amazing things in protection against stain, soil, and static. When no carpet is completely protected, today's products are better than ever.

When purchasing a carpet, be sure and buy from a reputable dealer. Look to a quality-oriented decorating center for a good selection of custom carpets as well as better-grade pads and qualified installers. Remember that with carpet, as with many other things in life, you usually get what you pay for.