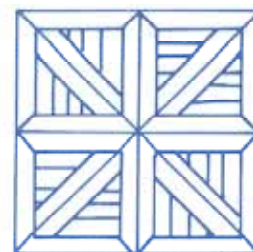


# Selecting and Caring for Hard-Surface, Resilient and Wood Floors



*We stand on them, walk on them, drag furniture across them, drop food and water on them and, in general, treat the floors of our homes as if they were going to last forever. We expect them to be durable, lovely to look at, easy to maintain, yet reasonable in cost. The floors in our homes take a lot of abuse. They hold up amazingly well considering that often the choice is based on economy, what is popular at the time, or appearance, instead of considering how well the product will wear or how easy it will be to clean.*

*When considering flooring, you will find that you have many choices in design, color and price. Your decision may depend on subflooring, surface finishes and installation. You may also want to make another decision if a particular flooring material requires constant or daily care to look good or stay clean.*

*Three broad categories covered in this publication are:*

- *hard surface, such as stone, masonry, brick, concrete and tile;*
- *resilient, which includes solid vinyl or blends; and*
- *wood, both hardwood and soft wood.*

## Hard-Surface Materials

Hard-surface materials are very durable and versatile, and most are easy to care for. While some are man-made, all have natural materials as their base, and they blend well in country or contemporary settings.

**Stone and masonry** materials like sandstone (bluestone, quartzite and cherry log), stone (fieldstone, flagstone, granite, slate), and marble (Italian, travertine, terrazzo) may be split into thin slabs to be used for flooring or paving. Bluestone and slate are probably the most common types of flagging.

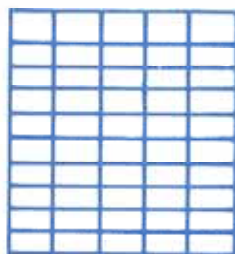
The least expensive stones are irregular in shape. Stones can also be bought pre-cut to create patterns.

Different effects can be achieved by selecting stones of various colors, such as purple and red Vermont slate, cool, black Pennsylvania slate, or Tennessee bluestone in tones of rose and buff.

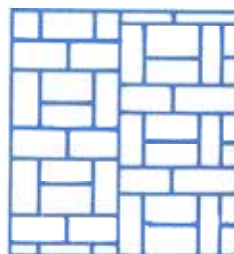
Quartzite and some varieties of granite are cool to the touch, since their color tends to slow down heat absorption. Bluestone and slate can get quite hot. Cherry log, a type of quartzite, is shot through with veins of iron oxide and looks much like a cross-section of a tree trunk.

Marble is considered a luxurious material. It comes in many colors and price ranges. While Italian marble is widely used, marble from Alabama and Tennessee is also

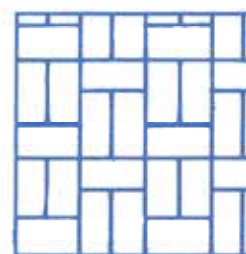
## Brick Patterns



Jack-on-jack



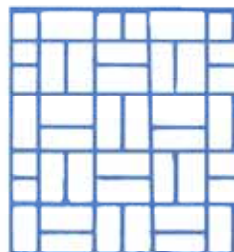
Basketweave



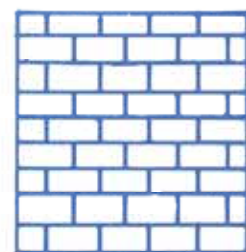
Basketweave



Diagonal Herringbone



Basketweave



Running Bond

popular. Marble is usually sold pre-cut into squares or rectangles.

Brown and beige travertine is the least expensive type of marble; onyx is the most costly. Marble is a soft stone which tends to mar or stain easily, and it's slippery when wet.

Terrazzo is a mixture of marble chips and Portland cement, which is poured over cement and then polished to an ultra-smooth, hard finish. Terrazzo can be used inside or out, and it's a good choice for high traffic areas. It also is slippery when wet.

**Paving brick**, called a paver, is available in a wide variety of colors and textures. Brick is very durable, easy to maintain, and is among the least expensive hard-surface materials. Brick can be laid in many different patterns as shown on page 1 and it goes well with a country decor. To prevent staining, brick must be sealed.

**Concrete** — tiles or poured concrete — is a very durable material often used in service areas of the home, like laundry rooms, patios, basements and garages or carports. You can paint concrete or color can

be added to the wet mixture. Concrete should be sealed to prevent staining.

**Ceramic or quarry** tile has become very popular for home use. Ceramic tiles, often found in bathrooms and kitchens, can be used for floors in family rooms, dining rooms, utility rooms, halls and entrances. The big advantages of ceramic tile are ease of maintenance and its wide range of colors, designs, shapes and textures, as shown below.

Unglazed quarry tile, often selected for color and textural interest, may be a good choice for kitchens with a country look. Quarry tile can also be bought in many brightly colored and glazed forms.

Mosaic ceramic tiles are small one-inch or two-inch squares that come grouped on threaded mesh, paper backing or joined with silicone rubber. They can be used for floors or walls and are available in many patterns.

Mexican tile is a terra cotta-like tile. Often classified as a quarry tile, it is soft, usually unglazed, and

must be protected with a sealer or the surface will release a residue — This is called powdering.

Tiles are available glazed or unglazed. The glaze, which is applied between the first and final firings, gives the tiles their hard surface. Glazing provides color and produces different finishes. Unglazed tiles are naturally dull. Their color comes from the clay used to make the tile or from pigment mixed into the clay. Quarry tile is usually produced in the unglazed form and made into many sizes, shapes and a broad range of earthen colors.

Floor tiles are larger and thicker than wall tiles. They come in basic shapes like squares, rectangles, hexagons, octagons, as well as exotic shapes like Moorish and ogee. The cost of tiles varies greatly. One-color, glazed squares with flat surfaces are the least expensive. You'll pay more for tiles with unusual shapes, extra texture, multicolor glazes or a combination of these special features. Ceramic tile and quarry tile can become very slick when wet. A non-gloss glaze or textured finish is recommended for tiles used for flooring.

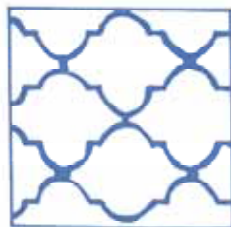
Tile floors have some disadvantages. They can be costly. Since the surfaces are so hard, your legs may get tired if you stand on them for long periods. Dishes or glassware dropped on the hard surface will probably break, and the tiles themselves can be broken if hard objects are dropped on them.

However, all types of tiles are very tough. When they are properly sealed, they are resistant to water, grease or stains, and they are easier to maintain than most other types of flooring materials.

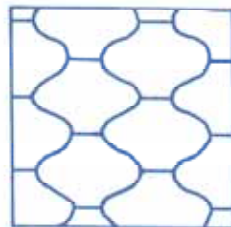
## Resilient Flooring

Vinyl is the most common type of resilient flooring. Other resilient flooring materials include cork,

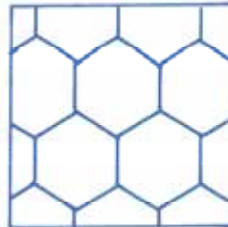
### Ceramic Tile Patterns



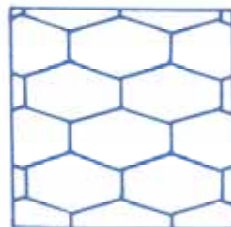
Ogee



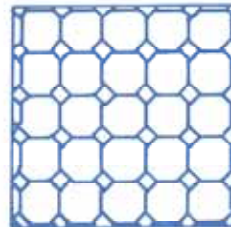
Moorish



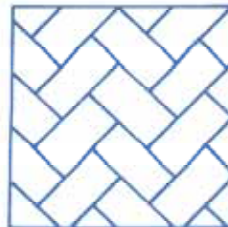
Hexagon



Key Hexagon



Octagon and Square



Herringbone



asphalt, polyurethane and linoleum, but these are less popular and not widely available today.

Vinyl has a slight "give" or resiliency, which makes it more comfortable when you stand on it. It also helps prevent breakage of dropped items. You can choose either sheet vinyl or tiles in the natural look of stone or brick or in many bright colors or muted designs.

Sheet flooring is popular since it can give you a seamless, easy-to-care-for floor. Inlaid vinyl is the most durable, but also more expensive, since the colors and patterns go all the way through to the backing.

Rotovinyl is created by printing photographic images of materials such as brick or wood on vinyl, then coating the image with a clear vinyl or polyurethane top coat. The thickness of the top coat (10-25 mils) will affect the life and look of the flooring. Check the amount of cushioning on the back of rotovinyl flooring by squeezing or stepping on a sample. It should be soft but firm. Push a fingernail into the cushion and release. The indentation should disappear quickly. Rotovinyl products look good, but usually don't last as long as inlaid vinyl.

Vinyl tiles are very durable and the cost is moderate to expensive. The pattern in a solid vinyl tile runs the full thickness of the tile, so the color or design won't wear off. Rubber tiles are made from synthetic rubber or a combination of synthetic and real rubber. They are long-wearing, quiet, waterproof, expensive and come in solid colors with ribbed or studded surfaces which make them good choices for high-traffic areas. Vinyl composition tiles combine vinyl resins with filler materials to create moderately priced, durable surfaces.

Cork and asphalt are also available. Cork should be coated with vinyl to prevent staining. It's

attractive and resilient, but expensive. Asphalt tile, the first resilient tile made, is inexpensive but it is brittle. It stains and dents occur easily. Asphalt isn't widely used today.

## Wood

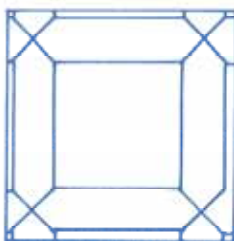
Wood flooring is durable and strong, beautiful and easy on the feet. The most commonly used hardwoods are oak, maple, birch and beech. Softwoods include fir, pine, hemlock and redwood.

Wood floors may be solid wood or laminated. Solid wood can be sanded and refinished many times. However, installation is more

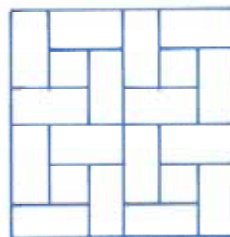
difficult and expensive. Laminated products have a 1/6-inch to 1/8-inch top layer of wood veneer, which has been laminated under heat and pressure to two cross-banded layers of less expensive wood. Laminated floors can only be sanded three to five times, but it is easy to install, since laminates can be laid over concrete, linoleum, vinyl or ceramic tile.

Wood flooring is made and laid as strips, planks, parquet or tiles. Strip flooring is the most common. Plank flooring comes in uniform or random widths. A mix of narrow and wide widths can give a very beautiful pattern. Both strip and

## Parquet Wood Patterns



Jeffersonian



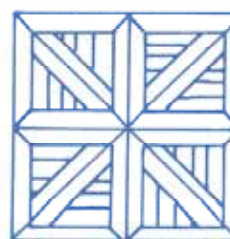
Haddon Hall



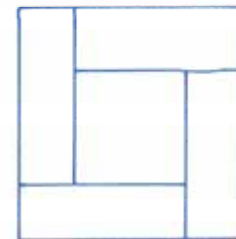
Parallel Finger Block



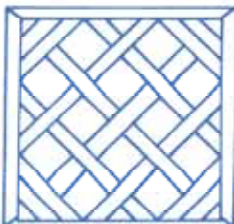
Herringbone



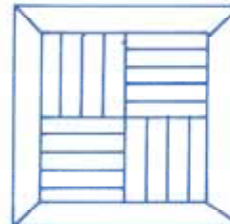
Canterbury



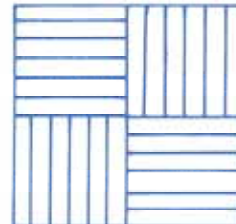
Stone



Fontainebleau



Louisville



Finger Block

plank flooring can be purchased factory-finished or unfinished.

Parquet (block flooring) comes in 6-inch and 9-inch squares. Parquet blocks are made with short stripes of oak, teak, pecan, ash or walnut wood laid in geometrical or mosaic patterns to create the squares. Basket weave and herringbone are popular designs, but many others can be created (see page 3).

Parquet can be purchased pre-finished, or you can stain and seal the unfinished squares yourself. While all wood flooring is durable, parquet is the least able to stand up

to heavy traffic.

Wood tiles are similar to parquet squares, but they aren't made of small strips of wood or laid in mosaic patterns. They are solid 6-inch, 9-inch or 12-inch blocks of oak, maple or laminates. They are available finished or unfinished.

### **Caring for Your Hard-Surface Flooring**

Most hard-surface flooring materials need only an occasional wet mopping. Slate used in high traffic areas may need to be sealed with a coat of silicone or acrylic

sealer and then waxed. Marble, the hardest surface to maintain, needs regular cleaning, sealing and polishing. Brick should be sealed and waxed every six months and cleaned with a damp mop. Concrete should be coated with an acrylic sealer and mopped as needed. Terrazzo requires very little maintenance; just seal or wax, then damp mop.

Resilient flooring needs a daily sweep and occasional damp-mopping. Wash every three to six weeks with a water, ammonia and mild detergent solution. (Caution: Do not mix ammonia with a detergent that contains bleach.) No-wax vinyls which lose some of their shine can be restored by applying a thin coat of a special dressing (an acrylic product, not a wax), which is recommended by the flooring manufacturer. Vinyl without a no-wax finish needs an occasional thin coat of a water-based wax. Clean grease off rubber and asphalt tiles quickly, and wash with a mild detergent and water solution. You may need to use a water-based wax.

Wood should be vacuumed or dry-mopped often. Wax lightly and buff floors finished with varnish every three months. Makers of polyurethane and Swedish finishes discourage the use of wax. However, some flooring experts suggest that you can get better wear and appearance if you wax the surface once or twice a year. On a regular basis, vacuum and damp-mop as needed. Always remove stains promptly.

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### **Summary**

There are many flooring materials on the market for your home.

Whether you choose a resilient vinyl, wood or a material like slate, brick or ceramic tile, consider:

- **Aesthetics:** What look, feel, design, texture and color do you want?
- **Wear:** How much traffic do you have in your home?
- **Cost:** Various grades and qualities are available. Buy the best you can afford.
- **Comfort:** Some materials are softer underfoot, some are cooler and some provide a more slip-resistant surface.
- **Noise:** Resilient materials deaden sound while hard-surface and wood floors reflect sound.
- **Safety:** Avoid slippery finishes, especially in bathrooms and kitchens. Be sure rugs laid over any surface have nonskid backings or pads.
- **Installation:** Some flooring materials are fine for the do-it-yourselfer. Others are better left to the professional. Be sure the subfloor is prepared for the type of flooring you are using.
- **Maintenance:** Some types of floors require daily care, others only occasional care. Select the product that best meets your needs and learn how to take care of it.

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