

FLOOR FINISHES

Floors define interior spaces, but unlike walls and ceilings are walked upon. More so than any other surface in the home, floors must bear the burden of constant abuse from floor traffic, dirt, sand, animals and workmen and cleaning.

Floors can be hard, soft, cool, warm, highly polished or textured. They define areas of traffic flow, changes in levels throughout the building and may be a feature or completely subordinate in overall design contribution.

Selecting floor finishing materials requires special consideration. It is important that each area be assessed for finishing selections according to the following:-

1. **Function** – wet or dry, formal or informal, summer or winter use, child or adult;
2. **Age** – non-slip, light reflecting, children or adults, noise absorbing;
3. **Durability** – soft or hard, glazed or non glazed, gloss or non reflective;
4. **Maintainability** – easily wiped clean or polished, colour and quality of fixings and grout;
5. **Cost** – formal or informal, age of user, heavily decorative will date quickly; and
6. **Aesthetic** – formal or informal, modern, traditional, children or adults, light reflective, long lasting embellishment or short lived, fixed or loose.

Structural floors are generally of two types being concrete slab or timber.

Concrete Slabs consist of cement, sand, lime, aggregate and water poured on site over reinforcing metal mesh to add strength and stability preventing shrinkage and cracking.

Slabs can be enhanced by the addition of colour pigments and polishing.

Decorative surface toppings such as sand, aggregate and vinyl chips may be sprinkled to add dappled colour and texture as well as adding grip in wet areas such as bathrooms. Slab surfaces may be etched, colour stained or painted.

Slabs can be covered with timber, tiles, stone, carpet, vinyl, sisal, cork, rubber, bamboo and terrazzo. Concrete slabs are highly durable but can be cold, hard and noisy when used as a finished floor.

Structural Timber Floors are planks of dressed timber laid on timber floor joists. If you are fortunate enough to have structural solid timber floors, it is recommended they be finished with polyurethane, waxed, oiled and polished. However, these finishes require weekly or monthly enhancement depending on your degree of housekeeping enthusiasm.

TIMBER FLOORS

Timber floors are regarded by many as the supreme floor finish visually enhancing any interior and may be

natural or reconstituted in layers or homogenous boards.



Solid timber plank floor

Timber floors are suitable for most areas of the home, and easily maintained and cleaned.

Of great importance when selecting a timber floor is the origin of timber used and the availability and type of timber preferred which shall determine the cost and long term appeal.

Is the timber a hard wood or soft wood, locally grown or imported?

Timber grown in diverse environments will determine how the timber performs in the Australian environment as softer, introduced timbers grown in foreign humid climates tend to move, split and discolour compared to locally grown timbers or imported from cold climates.

The most redeeming feature of solid timber plank flooring is natural beauty and longevity.

Solid timber floors will outlive most other types of flooring and home dwellers for that matter, depending on the type of manufacture of flooring selected and I list these below for reference.

Timber flooring is available in essentially three types as follows:-

1. **Floating or laminated floors** are loosely applied over existing floor surfaces.

Budget floating floors are manufactured using a hardwood substrate finished with melamine, aluminium oxide protectants and a balancing PVC backing veneer.

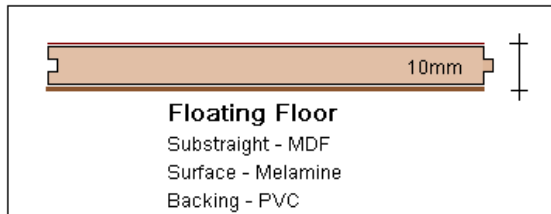
The melamine floating floor is laid on plastic and polystyrene sheeting to minimize moisture penetration. A small gap is necessary at walls to allow for expansion. Once installed the floor may be used immediately.

Melamine finished floating floors are relatively inexpensive and easily installed. If damaged they may be replaced instantly by the homeowner or supplier/retailer.

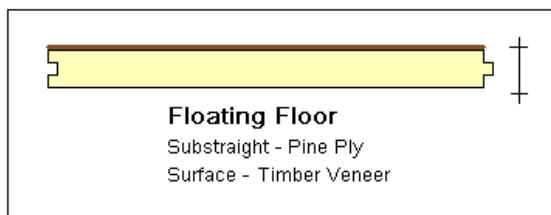
When used in high moisture areas the flooring may buckle. Drumming is also a major disadvantage and can be exacerbated when laid on upper floor concrete slabs.

The inclusion of hair felt underlay may help to reduce noise but add to the overall cost. Pre-purchase discussions regarding the existing floor onto which the floating floor is to be overlaid would be advisable.

Consulting a timber flooring specialist would be advisable before concluding selections.



Floating floors are also available in solid timber, manufactured with a pine ply backing and solid timber surface veneers of various timber types and top coated in polyurethane.

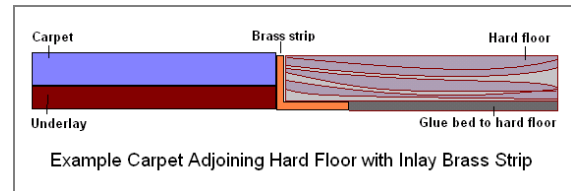


Melamine and timber veneer floating floors are available in tongue and groove planked boards or parquetry blocks.

Prior to purchasing, compare all warranties and guarantees for each floor type and please remember, guarantees are only as good as the company providing the product and service.

When abutting soft floor coverings to hard floor coverings, consider adjoining options as the level of each flooring finish will vary in height. Prior to building a new home ensure with your builder to adjust the concrete slab finished height in that area to

accommodate the variation in height of various floor finishes.



If however, the building work has commenced, this may still be possible but an expensive option. Hard floor selections should be concluded prior to commencement of building works and signing of Contracts.

Before laying hard floors or tiles, a brass channel is fixed to the slab providing a hard edge strip protecting both floor finishing materials.

When the brass inlay channel is not an option, inexpensive metal or vinyl strips are available in colours to match floor coverings. With time, these strips dislodge and are not regarded as appealing options.

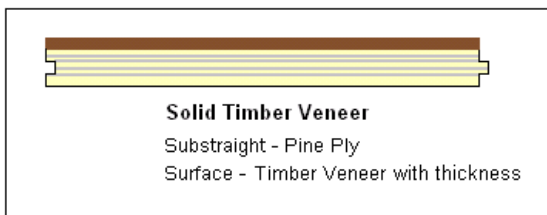
2. **Timber veneer floors** are adhered to a chipboard or solid timber ply substrate finished with polyurethane.

Less expensive timber veneer floors may have extremely thin surface veneers of 2 – 3 mm whereby, superior quality flooring may have additional thickness to the surface finish.

It is advisable to check the degree of thickness to ensure longevity of the product and potential for renovation if

required. This floor may be floating or fixed to battens.

Timber veneer on ply is more stable in its structure and provides a cost effective “solid timber” look which can be restored in situ to the degree of thickness of the surface veneer.



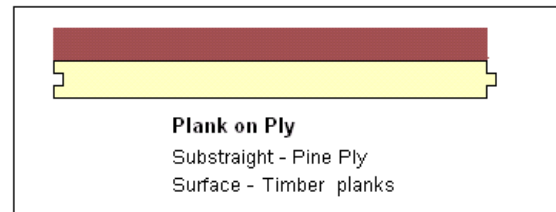
The cost of timber veneer can fluctuate considerably determined by the type and quality of substrate, the thickness of the surface veneer finish, type of timber selected and method of installation.

3. **Plank on ply** is solid timber planks of 10mm or thicker on a ply or chipboard substrate eliminating individual board movement and drumming.

Plank on ply can be affixed to a concrete slab or timber battens and is available in a variety of timber types, patterns, and thickness and board widths.

Cost depends on the type of timber and pattern and method of manufacture, installation and finish.

In the past, parquetry was expensive because of timber availability and intensive installation procedures.



However, with the introduction of plank on ply flooring construction and the on-going availability of local and exotic timbers, the cost is now comparable to most other solid timber plank or timber tile floor finishes.

4. **Solid timber planks**, regarded the most prestigious and beautiful of all timber flooring is understandably the most expensive because of solid timber availability, installation and finishing costs.

Timber planks can be applied to timber floor joists or fixed timber battens on concrete slabs.

Often regarded as the most prestigious of floor finishes, the selection of inappropriate timbers for a particular environment may result in costly renovations and long term disappointment as softer timbers can warp, fade and split in hot, dry environments.

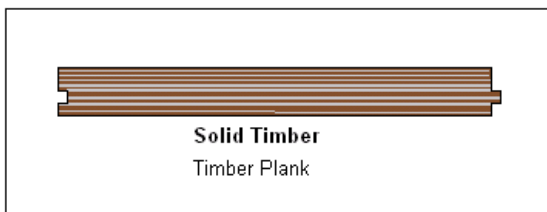
Being one of the most costly floor finishes, it must be noted that rarely do I see a timber floor, either floating, plank on ply or plank that does not have a rug or carpet square overlay adding to the overall cost.

Although cool in summer and warm in winter, timber can scratch, is relatively hard underfoot and is not recommended for wet areas.

Timber can be noisy and will change colour ultimately from fading.

Applied to “timber” appropriate areas of the home requiring a tougher floor finish, natural timber has great appeal and long lasting durability because of its potential for ongoing renovation.

Top coat finishes can be natural such as wax, oil or polyurethane for highly exposed situations.



Although a harder floor surface, solid timber has a quality quite unlike other floor finishes.

FLOOR COVERING SELECTIONS

Most buildings today are built on concrete slabs for economic and environmental reasons.

Consumers have a multitude of floor finishes from which to select to suit any architectural style, budget, durability, and material and maintenance consideration.

The following selections discussed are those most commonly used.

MARBLE AND GRANITE

Marble and granite floors are generally limited to formal areas such as entries, dining and living rooms.

The Greeks and Romans used stones extensively because of its beauty, versatility of design possibilities and degree of creativity in mosaic chips, availability and durability



Marble and timber boards

Stones are especially suited to wet areas such as bathrooms and kitchens albeit in small quantities unless the budget is endless.

Granite and marble can be expensive depending on the type, thickness and tile or slab size.

Surfaces are polished and sealed for protection but with wear may eventually lose their polish. Renovation of stone is extremely difficult and expensive. To avoid long term visual degradation from normal

wear and dirt abrasion, select harder granites rather than softer marbles.

Most granites and marbles are easily cleaned and maintained with a soft mop and water although softer porous stones in wet situations may discolour with time.

Owners of granite and marble floors should adhere strictly to supplier's care instructions to avoid long term disappointment from ingrained soil.

Granite is regarded as the most prestigious of all stones and in new contemporary homes and renovations is used extensively as a floor treatment, bench tops, splash backs and vanity tops.

The most redeeming features of granite and marble are natural appeal, permanence and durability.

Advantages and disadvantages

With time, porous stones absorb oil, chemicals, moisture and general grime, and lose their polish and when used as a bench top will blunt even the best quality cutting implements.

When selecting stone for kitchens it is generally recommended that darker colours be selected rather than lighter colours.

Their ability to remain cool in hot summer months when protected from the direct sun and absorb heat in cooler winter months can help in the ongoing quest for natural environmental comfort without artificial electrical enhancement.

General day to day cleaning of light reflective materials can be continuous and arduous as can any polished surface, whether stone or glass, mirror, highly polished tiles, gloss laminates and vinyl.

CERAMIC TILES

Ceramic tiles are mineral enhanced, heat hardened clay, stone or porcelain biscuits sometimes glazed, unglazed or polished, laid in-situ on a bed of mortar.



Terracotta Tiles

Tiles may be porous or vitrified (*non-porous*) and extruded or pressed. Generally the lighter the biscuit the more delicate the tile but there are exceptions to this rule

Machine manufactured tiles are generally non absorbent, hygienic and healthy, easy to clean and colour fast and thermal.

Unglazed handmade tiles are usually porous and soft and not recommended because of soiling and cleaning problems.

Each tile type has its own characteristics and selections are best made according to the following:-

1. **Function** – wet or dry area, private or formal, summer or winter room;
2. **Age of user** – non-slip; light reflective, noise absorbing;
3. **Durability** – glazed or non glazed, gloss or non-reflective;
4. **Cost** – formal or informal, children or adults;
5. **Aesthetics** – modern or traditional, light reflecting, colour and pattern, long lasting embellishment or trendy and short lived; and
6. **Maintenance** – easily cleaned or requires additional polishing, and colour and quality of grout regarding mould and staining may be an ongoing problem.

There are several tile types available with each having its own purpose, structure and cost structure.

Bi-cottura tiles are twice fired, one firing for the base and second firing for the additional glaze. These tiles may be porous and are generally used for walls.

Mono-cottura tiles are single fired at a higher temperature than bi-cottura. They are stronger and more suitable for floors however; they may also be used on walls.

Glazed tiles are clay and/or stone based, finished with porcelain glaze available in a variety of patterns, colours, textures and finishes for wall and/or floor situations.

Glazed wall tiles generally have softer porcelain bases or biscuits.

Glazed tiles, when chipped or scratched will expose the underlying base or biscuit and if contrasting in colour may undermine the appearance of the tile and room and can be impossible to restore unless removed.

It may be advisable to have a supply of spare tiles for emergencies. Glazed tile prices vary greatly depending on the quality and amount of surface embellishment.

Wall tiles cannot be used on floors, but conversely floor tiles can be used on walls.

Homogeneous porcelain or non-glazed tiles are dense and suitable for floors and walls.

When scratched or chipped they retain their appearance therefore restoration is not usually required.

Porcelain tiles can be polished and are extremely hard wearing therefore used in heavy traffic areas and commercial applications.

Quarry tiles are manufactured from clay, compressed using heat and extruded. They can have an even appearance and are generally used for commercial and outdoor applications having a more rustic appearance and earthy colouring.

Although plain in design and because of their textural quality, quarry tiles have a visually lasting appeal more than any other tile.

Mosaic tiles were first used by the Romans on floors and walls. Mosaics are timeless and are currently experiencing a “Renaissance” in the tiling industry.

The mosaic tile manufacturing process may be any of the aforementioned. Tiles are applied to mesh or paper sheets for ease of installation.

A variety of tile qualities and colours are available from heavy industrial rough finishes to extremely fine, highly polished finishes for the more up-market design aficionados.

Once again, the price of the tile can reflect the quality with exception to sale promotions when excellent quality tiles can be obtained at never to be beaten prices.

Heavy duty mosaic tiles are best used in areas of high traffic, externally and internally and wet areas.

Highly polished tiles can be slippery particularly when wet and depending on footwear, so every care should be taken in high traffic areas to avoid personal injury from wrongly selected tiles.

A variety of attractive non-slip tiles are available at most tile supply outlets for the elderly or young.

TILES GENERALLY

Homogeneous tiles are durable and easily cleaned with water. However,

softer porous polished tiles can have the same maintainability problems as granite and marble.

Porous and over glossy tiles should be avoided in wet service areas such as kitchens and bathrooms and around pools.

Tiles, except if porous or highly glossed are excellent floor finishes for wet areas and heavy traffic flow areas and when used in conjunction with carpets or rugs can provide a classical, warm timelessness to any interior.

CORK

Cork being a natural product was originally from the cork oak found in Portugal.

Cork tiles are shavings and granules compressed and baked in liquefied resins and can be homogeneous or laminated onto various backings.

Cork being non-allergenic, insect repellent, light and elastic and impervious to moisture and chemicals has a variety of suitable applications such as kitchens, laundries, work rooms and heavily used floor situations.

Cork is cool in summer and warm in winter, soft underfoot, absorbs noise and vibration and is a non-conductor of electricity.

Cork has natural beauty and warmth and is easily cleaned and maintained if well sealed.

The popularity of cork flooring has diminished somewhat over the last 15 years with the introduction of alternative flooring products.

Fortunately, cork flooring is making a comeback into the market place with the introduction of extremely attractive installation suggestions and corks ongoing advantages over most other floor finishes.

Cork flooring is highly suitable for family rooms, children's bedrooms and work rooms.

Slightly resilient and softer to ceramic tiles and plank timber, cork provides minimal softness underfoot lessening the side affects of foot, leg and back fatigue.

A chronic sufferer of back, foot, shoulder and arm fatigue mostly because of hard floors, I cannot emphasize enough the suitability of cork in domestic and commercial architecture, especially kitchens.

Easily laid, cork's main disadvantages are sealant drying time following application, denting under extreme pressure points such as stiletto heels, heavy furniture and pianos. With time, the dent will restore unless permanently cracked or broken.

Restoration is relatively simple on-site except for the sealant drying time. Well laid, the floor can appear seamless having hygienic qualities with crawlers, toddlers and pets in the home.

A most underestimated floor finish!!

VINYL

Vinyl sheets and tiles - are vinyl resins, plasticizers, pigments, and sometimes fillers in cheaper grades, formed into sheets or tiles under pressure while hot and usually laid on a backing of alkali-resistant materials.

Vinyl is available in a variety of designs, colours, patterns, thickness and qualities and can resemble marbles, granites, mosaics, timber, slate and tiles.

Quality vinyl is insect repellent, imperviousness to moisture, grease and household acids, durable, resistant to chipping and denting and has natural luster.

Cleaning is minimal and joins can be welded. Vinyl can be covered up walls and corners providing complete rodent and insect protection in food preparation areas under cupboards.

Cushioned vinyl is resilient, warm and soft under foot.

Thinner, less expensive vinyls can tear easily, stretch and are susceptible to damage from sharp objects.

Vinyls are produced in sheet sizes of 2m, 3m and 4m widths, tiles and planks. Prices vary according to quality and thickness.

Most soft flooring suppliers have selections of vinyl ranging from less expensive sheet vinyl to the better quality vinyl tiles and planks.

More expensive intricate designs can be used for residential formal areas and up-market commercial applications.

Vinyl is suitable for wet areas such as kitchens, laundries and workshops, but unsuitable for bathrooms unless seamless and covered at walls.

There are many beautiful, exceptional quality vinyl floor coverings available.

One in particular, the timber floor plank look alike, is almost impossible to distinguish to that of natural timber planks.

Having a finely manufactured rubber look, vinyl is not a preferred floor finish in domestic architecture and more often specified for commercial, retail and medical situations because of its durability, anti-absorbent, insect repellent, and health and maintenance qualities.

CARPETS

Machine made carpets were developed by the English and Americans in the 19th Century replacing expensive hand woven oriental rugs.

Fitted rugs as they were known then were responsible for the end of loose hand made rugs.

Carpets can be natural yarns or wholly manmade fibres, tufted, woven or felted together to produce 3.6m widths of fabric suitable for floor coverings.

Carpets add beauty, softness, warmth, texture, resilience, quietude and a friendly intimacy to rooms.

Carpets are available in a variety of qualities, colours, patterns, designs, and thickness of yarn and fibre types, including wool, cotton, silk, nylon, polypropylene and acrylic.

WOVEN CARPETS

Woven carpets are made on looms producing pile and backing in one operation.



Woven Carpet Structure

Woven carpets are regarded as prestigious because of the method of manufacture, their flexibility and ability to include intricate designs in the weaving process, and durability and degree of plushness. Woven carpets wear better than tufted carpets because of the even distribution of the pile when walked upon.

Well-known and highly respected Axminster and Wilton 27" wide English manufactured carpets and Brintons 3.66m wide carpets are recognised for their fine quality.

Supreme woven carpets when compared per square metre, cost more than best quality tufted carpets undoubtedly, but when compared to the cost of solid timber flooring per square metre, equate honorably, in fact, more often quite favorably.

The weaving manufacturing process of woven carpet enables fine laying details such as borders to rooms and runners to staircases.

Woven carpets are used mainly in hotels, public theatres and home theatres for their intricate patterns, camouflaging wear and staining, but also for their contribution to the opulent enhancement of the architecture and interior design.

TUFTED CARPETS

Tufted carpets are piles of yarn or fibres attached to a pre-constructed backing by multi-needed machines.



Tufted Pile Structure

Tufted carpets are generally less expensive than woven carpets being plain in colour without pattern but can have contoured surface embellishment available in various types of manufacture and pile.

In poorer quality tufted carpets, the pile being less dense than woven carpet can separate or become flat in heavy traffic flow areas. Dirt becomes trapped at the base of the pile creating stains and ultimately severing the pile from the base reducing the life span of the carpet and spoiling the visual appeal.

PURCHASING CARPETS

In the past, it has been the colour of carpet taking priority over other carpet qualities during the selection process.

Prior to selecting carpets it is essential that classification details on the back of each sample are considered.

All **quality** carpets are graded by the following carpet classification organizations: -

- **ACCS**
Australian Carpet Classification Scheme

- **AWB**
Australian Wool Board
- **WBNZ**
Wool Board New Zealand

When classification is not evident on the showroom sample, avoid purchasing these carpets as they may be inferior or damaged thus waiving guarantees of quality and durability.

Carpets are graded as follows: -

1. **Light Duty** – suitable for short term or light installations. Generally inexpensive and not recommended for normal residential applications.
2. **Medium Duty** – suitable for light use bedrooms and often installed in display homes because of their relatively low cost but short lived high quality visual appeal.

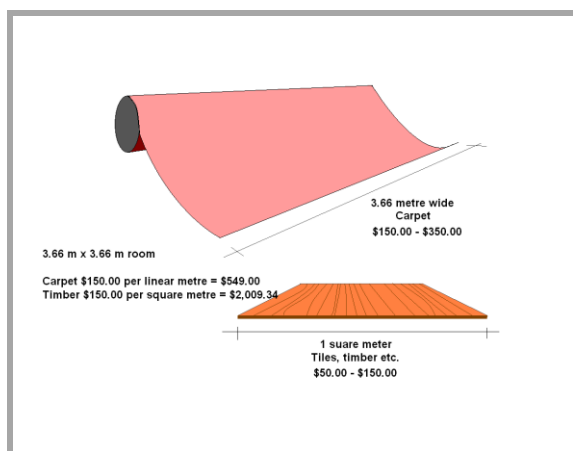
These carpets are not recommended for normal residential traffic flow areas but may be suitable where budget is an issue such as store rooms and rental properties.

3. **Heavy Duty** – used mainly in budget conscious residential situations.
4. **Extra Heavy Duty** – for normal residential and light commercial applications.

5. **Extra Heavy Duty Including Stairs** – the most durable carpet in all domestic situations.

CARPET COSTS

Broadloom carpets are sold by the linear metre in widths of 3.66 metre rolls. For cost comparisons, compare the cost of carpets to the cost of hard floor finishes by converting the lineal metre carpet cost including underlay into square metre cost.



Compare broadloom carpet to timber by the square metre

Carpet selling at \$180.00 per metre including underlay, converted to a square metre cost would equate to \$180.00 divided by 3.66 equal to \$49.20 per square metre compared to a timber floor costing \$120.00 per square metre.

Considering cost comparisons, is it wise to install a timber floor for \$120.00 psm only to be superseded by a rug at a cost of approximately \$350.00 per metre resulting in a rather expensive floor installation at the end of the day costing around \$470.00 per square metre? Phew!!

The options to be considered in this case would be a timber floor surround

with a quality carpet inlay or installation of the best quality carpet without the timber floor combination.

CARPET YARNS AND FIBRES

There are many different fibres used throughout the world in the production of floor covering fabrics.

Until now, best quality wool yarn and nylon fibres have been widely used in Australia. However in the future we will see the introduction of new fibres for carpet manufacture.

Wool and nylon, being the most commonly used and recommended for carpet production are discussed as follows:-

Wool – New Zealand Wool is recognised as a premium carpet yarn. The majority of wool carpets available in Australia are manufactured from premium New Zealand wool.

Premium Australian wool is generally manufactured into quality clothing and blankets.

However, some lesser quality Australian carpets can be manufactured from clothing industry rejected wool but these are not generally regarded by the industry as quality carpets.

The disadvantages of wool carpet are as follows: -

- sheds fibres naturally (*felts*) which does not necessarily harm the carpet but when manufactured as a loop pile

carpet with spun nylon can cause major aesthetic problems;

- is susceptible to insect attack, and
- shrinks, felts and stains from over cleaning and rubbing.

The advantages of wool carpets are as follows:-

- has natural beauty and soft to touch;
- is stain resistant depending on the lanolin content;
- is strong;
- self-extinguishing and flame retardant;
- easily dyed;
- anti-static;
- quality wool has lasting durability; and
- spiral in form thus resilient, reshaping itself with time.

Nylon – fibres are used extensively in carpet manufacture and are often combined with wool to overcome maintainability and durability problems associated with wool yarn.

The fibres most commonly used are “Stainmaster” “Carisse” and “Performance Plus.

Dupont fibres are regarded as supreme by the industry because of their stain resistance, resilience and anti-static properties providing a 7 year written guarantee on their fibres.

The disadvantages of nylon fibres are as follows: -

- some nylon fabrics have a slight sheen unacceptable to consumers;
- nylon melts when burnt resulting in a hard to remove unsightly burnt ball;
- nylon fibres, being non-absorbent are difficult to dye following manufacture;
- some nylon fibres have little or no resilience leaving permanent dents;
- nylon carpet can generate static electricity; and
- may be hard to the touch and hot in summer months.

The advantages of nylon fibre are as follows: -

- best quality nylon can cost less than best quality wool;
- nylon is insect repellent;
- quality nylon resists stains and is easily spot cleaned;
- greater variety of vibrant colours obtainable;
- solution dyed yarns have excellent colour permanence; and
- quality nylon is hard wearing.

Fortunately, the stigma attached to nylon carpets in the past has faded with the manufacture and introduction

of quality nylon fibres for carpet manufacture.

Underlay-

The life span of your carpet will be greatly enhanced by the addition of a quality, compatible underlay.

Foam has excellent noise absorption qualities but avoid cheap grades as these will flatten and stretch creating problems with your carpet in the future.

Felt is generally used on first floor applications, reconstituted wooden sub-floors and stairs carpeted in a woven carpet. Felt is not suitable for tufted carpets as the carpet can slip and stretch.

Hair felt is manufactured in 6lb and 8 lb weights and used for woven carpets.

Although more expensive than all other underlay, hair felt is softer under foot providing more stability, extremely durable and will lengthen the life span of woven carpet.

Unfortunately, hair felt will flatten and stretch with time so it may be necessary to re-stretch your carpet once or twice as required.

Rubber is available in 5 qualities recognised by their colours as follows:-

- **Black** – standard quality
Residential Light duty –
- **Gold** – medium quality
Residential Medium duty –
- **Platinum** – high quality
Residential/Commercial duty –

- **Supa Blue** – extra high quality
Residential/Commercial duty-
- **Prime** – highest quality.
Commercial duty –

Underlay assists in prolonging the life of the carpet, enhancing the beauty and comfort underfoot and should never be underestimated in any new carpet installation.

If replacing old carpet the existing underlay may appear to be in “as new” condition. It is wise to check the entire area of underlay whilst the new carpet is being installed as condition can vary from room to room and area to area especially where wet areas adjoin dry areas.

Beware of lesser quality imported underlay using the same colour codes and please, be home when the carpet and underlay are installed.

Ensure the underlay ordered is actually the underlay delivered by checking documentation and product packaging.

Gold underlay in either foam or rubber is generally recommended for quality domestic installations including stairs.

Should acoustics and moisture be an issue it may be advantageous to install a higher quality underlay such as platinum.

Quality rubber underlay is dust, lint and fibre free and can be installed with approved floor heating systems to a surface temperature up to 40c.

Rubber underlay is not recommended for woven carpets as they move, stretch and pucker having adverse effects on your carpet.

Prior to conclusion of carpet and underlay selections, discuss at length recommended underlay available, characteristics, costs and warranties with the supplier.

Foam underlay, like rubber is available in colour-coded qualities as previously mentioned.

Quality rubber and foam underlay are similar in that they provide the same characteristics but feel slightly different underfoot.

It simply comes down to personal preferences. Foam underlay has more movement than rubber and may be less acceptable where stability is an issue.

Direct bonding of carpet to floor is common but not necessarily recommended for residential carpets.

However, in large areas where stretching could be a problem, direct bonding may be advisable.

Direct bonding is less expensive than other methods but can shorten the life span of the carpet.

If direct bonding is a consideration because of budget constraints, then it may be advisable to consider a polypropylene carpet.

Consult a retailer with respect to polypropylene carpets and direct bonding.

Dual bonding although extremely expensive is recommended for large prestigious installations.

The underlay is adhered to the floor and the carpet is adhered to the underlay eliminating movement and stretching where heavy traffic and furniture relocation is constant.

Dual bonding is generally recommended for hotels, home theatres, retail and large residential installations where budget is not an issue.

CARPET PILE

Carpet pile is the top surface fibre woven into the carpet backing having thickness and height. Carpet pile varies and can be plush, twisted, loop, or sculptured.

The pile of the carpet can be hand or machine woven. Carpets are machine woven whereas rugs can be machine or hand woven.

Plush pile has single evenly cut yarns uniformly smooth and soft. Sometimes regarded as “appealing” shading, pooling or tracking can occur in some situations.

The reasons are unknown and can be a visual irritation rather than an aesthetic pleasure.

Warranties do not apply to shading which is a particular and unusual and not always an apparent characteristic in plush pile carpets.



Plush Pile

Plush pile carpet is usually selected for its “velvet” appearance which is commonly regarded as a “luxury” look.

Loop pile is as the name suggests and is excellent for durability and non-tracking.



Loop Pile

However, as the wool yard and nylon fibre are incompatible, composition loop carpets of nylon and wool can felt at heavy traffic flow areas resulting in a rubbed worn appearance.

Composite wool and spun nylon sisal look-alike carpets have a propensity to this more so than other carpets.

Twist pile carpet was manufactured to overcome the problem of shading and tracking. The yarn is twisted, thus refracting the light eliminating tracking.



Twist Pile

Twist pile carpet has a regularity of colour, light reflection and shading with a textured finish camouflaging soiling, stains and wear and is highly

recommended for medium to heavy wear domestic situations.

Sculptured carpets can be combinations of all or any of the above and have lost popularity for now because of the more casual sisal look-alikes. Sisal carpets are generally loop pile.

Sculptured Pile

When selecting carpets the yarn or fibre, method of manufacture, manufacturer's warranties and Australian Carpet Classification Scheme specifications will determine the life span and continuous appeal of carpet.

Once satisfied with all of the above select chosen carpets and colours accordingly.

CARPET INSTALLATION

Carpet is best laid on rubber or foam underlay rather than directly bonded to floors for residential applications

A quality underlay will lengthen the life span of carpet as well as adding comfort, provide noise absorption and enhance insulation.

Carpets are available in a variety of types, designs, colours, patterns, weights and the prices are as varied as the selections.

Tufted and woven carpets are manufactured in roll widths of 3.66m

with the exception of Wilton carpets woven in widths of 27”.

SELECTING CARPETS

Avoid selecting carpet by colour and budget alone!

Your budget may determine the carpet yarn or fibre however there are other important factors to consider prior to concluding your preferred selection.

The carpet quality is guaranteed by the ACCS specifications on the back of the showroom sample.

Don't be fooled by over eager salesmen wanting to sell you lesser quality, cheaper carpets to meet their monthly budgets.

Quality wool yarn can be substantially more expensive than a wholly man-made fibre and the benefits and disadvantages of both types may be quite different depending on the lifestyle of the users.

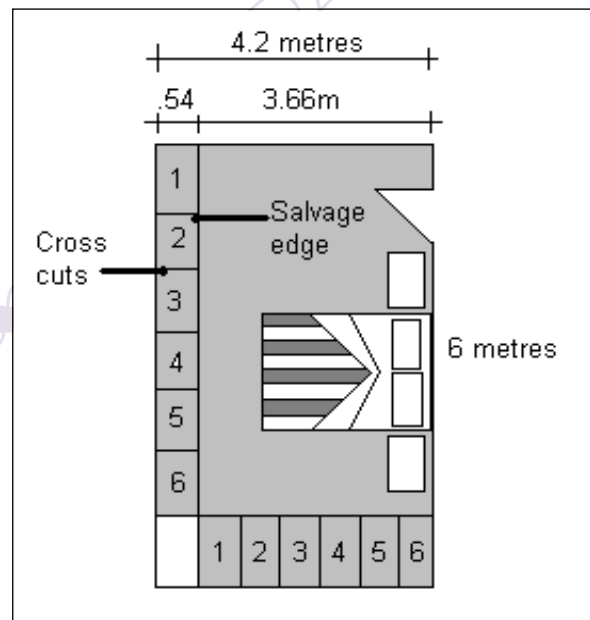
Ask selected retailers to measure the proposed carpeted areas providing a detailed dimensioned plan of the following:-

1. **Carpet direction** must be consistent;
2. **Locations of salvage seams** and cross joins down passage ways and across doors and rooms;
3. **Extent of carpeting** to include robes and detail quantities in writing;

4. **Specify** manufacturer's name, material type and code, colour, underlay manufacturer's name and underlay colour.

5. **Specify finishing edge treatments** in doorways and where carpet adjoins other floor finishes.

6. **Additional carpet may be required** for stairs and potential replacement and floor mats.



Avoid or reduce cross cuts

CARPET JOINS

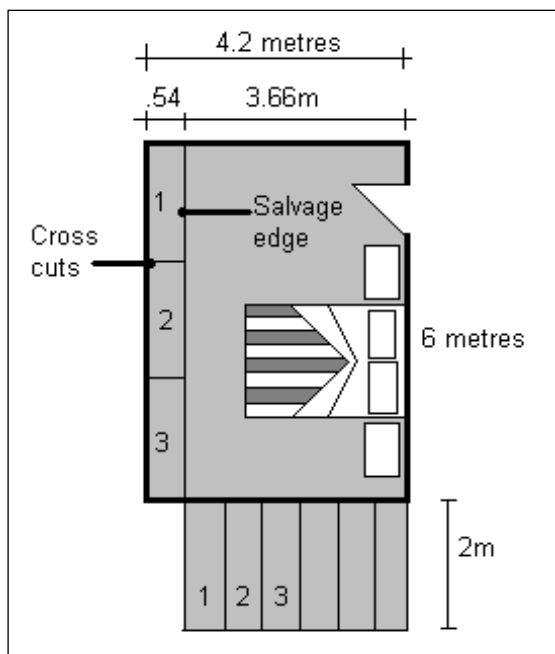
When quotations from suppliers vary it may be that cross cut joins have been used to keep the quantity at a minimum to “win the job”.

In the above example an additional metre of carpet has been added to the length of carpet required for the floor covering.

The additional metre is then cut into smaller sections by cross cutting into the pile to fill gaps in the room as demonstrated in the illustration above.

Cross cuts through pile are obvious, vulnerable to wear and displacement of pile resulting in an inferior carpet installation.

If joins are imminent, reduce the number of joins to a minimum as detailed in the following diagram:-



Minimize the number of cross joins

DOORWAYS AND PASSAGES

Joins in door ways and passage ways should be avoided at all cost. Both areas are critical spots for wear because of the heavy traffic. In many cases joins can be eliminated entirely with careful planning.

Beware of inferior quality carpet installation alternatives being offered to simply win the order.

UNLABELLED CARPETS

Unlabelled alternatives may be offered for sale. It is important to ask for the retailer's written guarantees and manufacturer's warranties confirming that the product meets the specifications required.

Whatever the selection, quality floor coverings are worth the investment.

We should never be influenced by advertising clichés and bonus gimmicks.

Select floor coverings for their suitability and lasting quality determined by the warranties and avoid short-term fashion trends and colours as these will date quickly resulting in long term dissatisfaction.

Guarantees are worthless if the company no longer exists in 12 months time.

To consider purchasing on price alone may have devastating consequences in the future.

It may be better to pay a little extra for a superior product from a well established, reputable company.

HARD FLOORING VERSUS SOFT FLOOR COVERINGS

Hard flooring is generally best for heavy traffic areas and wet areas, complimented by soft flooring in adjoining private or formal rooms.

Floor colour schemes should compliment or harmonize enhancing the overall appeal and ambiance of the

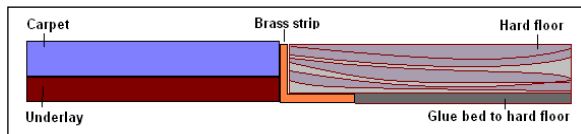
room. Avoid fabric and colour variation in smaller open plan situations.

EDGE TREATMENTS

Ideally, a brass angle should be affixed to the floor where hard surfaces abut soft surfaces prior to hard surfaces being laid. Joins can be in doorways, passage ways, in fact anywhere in the home.

The permanent brass edge will protect the hard edge flooring from cracking and crumbling providing a more suitable and neater long term edge.

This finish is regarded as superior to the plastic edge treatment.



Brass angle adjoining hard and soft floors

The finished floor levels should be constant with adjoining edge treatments enhancing both floor surfaces as demonstrated in the above illustration.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

It is essential that all floor covering warranties and guarantees and plans showing placement of joins are provided to ensure that the product provided and installed meets all required design specifications.

Ensure that all warranty and guarantee details are clearly itemized and

confirmed for future reference should a problem develop.

Labels are glued to the back of the showroom samples and it is important that these assurances are determined prior to carpets being selected. The assurances are as follows:-

- **Composition** of carpet;
- **ACCS grading**;
- **Qualification** of fibre such as 100% wool or nylon or composition;
- **Fabric warranties** and guarantees regarding, soiling, durability, shading, cleaning, rubbing etc; and
- **Specifications** for colour, names and codes.

FLOOR RUGS

Floor rugs can be hand or machine woven having the same qualities and characteristics as carpets.

When considering the purchase of floor rugs the differences can be vast and confusing. Following are the basics of floor rug types, their structure, costs and specifications.

Contemporary Hand Woven

Turkish Rugs

The most beautiful of all contemporary floor rugs are undoubtedly Turkish hand woven rugs.

The interpretation of the original **Turkish** rug was that each piece be entirely hand made using a vertical loom, cotton, wool or silk weft threads, double Turkish knot, hand spun, vegetable or chromatic dyed thread, hand woven into intricate designs with shaved pile.

Marco Polo travelled to Konya in Turkey and described the rugs as the most beautiful he had seen. These magnificent oriental rugs were obviously influenced by the Islamic culture having used prayer rugs for centuries.

In the sixteenth century rugs were extremely popular and regarded as an essential luxury.

In the eighteenth century the importation of oriental and Turkish rugs and carpets were forbidden in France and King Henry 1V established the first workshop in the Louvre.

Savonnerie Rugs

The second workshop was established in Chaillot at a disused children's hospital called Hospice de la Savonnerie. Later the two workshops were combined during the reign of Louis X1V at the Aubusson factory.

The original Savonnerie rugs were a much heavier tapestry woven rug having cut pile.

Aubusson Rugs

Later the smaller Aubusson rug was developed having no pile which meant that they could manufacture more to fill the demand.

European artists, especially the Dutch, used rugs in their paintings to add colour, interest and a touch of sumptuousness and prosperity to their paintings.

Today, Turkish rugs are woven to design specifications using wool or wool and silk.

Designs can be simple or intricate and the degree of wool and silk combinations vary according to the design and ultimate cost.



Weavers at a Vertical Loom

Turkish rugs are like artworks in that they have individuality and can appreciate in value if well maintained.

Each rug is unique, telling a story and signed by the creator.

If contemplating the purchase of a hand woven rug it is recommended that the buyer be somewhat familiar with quality specifications.

Why are Turkish hand woven rugs so appealing to discerning collectors?

The quality of creation and materials used is tantamount to the overall design and colour.

Wool, cotton or silk thread is threaded and tied into a foundation or kelim. A kelim can also be a double sided inexpensive flat weave rug.

The two types of knotting used in the creation of rugs are the single Persian Senneh and the double Turkish Ghiordes knot. The double Turkish knot is stronger than the Persian single knot. Cotton is most commonly used because of cost and strength.

Wool or silk used for quality rugs is hand spun and dyed using natural pigments.

Although the strongest of all natural yarns, silk does not tolerate cleaning so the majority of silk rugs are wall rugs only.

Best quality silks are recognised by their lustre. The beginning of the silk thread is superior in quality to the end of the silk thread having no lustre when rubbed.

Inferior quality silk is called "slub" silk and unbeknown to the purchaser, can be used in expensive silk rugs. Silk rugs may have a silk or cotton foundation.

When considering a wool rug, ensure that the wool is best quality by rubbing it with your hand. Good wool will fluff once but bad wool will fluff and break whenever rubbed.

In the case of less expensive rugs, or rugs being offered at never to be

beaten prices, they may be manufactured from dead wool taken from dead animals.

There is however, a market for less expensive lesser quality rugs but at what cost? Healthy bargaining never hurt anyone to my knowledge!

We compare best quality wool to dead wool by simply running a hand over the pile. Lanolin content and strength of fibre determines the quality of wool.

If the pile is smooth and silky we are half way to determining the quality of the yarn. Best quality wool can cost as much as best quality silk.

Price alone does not necessarily determine the quality of the rug or carpet.

Unsuspecting purchasers new to the market may be persuaded by less reputable rug suppliers that although highly discounted their chosen rug is of exceptional collectable quality.

This may or may not be the case and if unsure, seek the advice of a specialist and/or ask that a Written Guarantee or Provenance be provided along with Directors guarantees that the article is as genuine as they guarantee prior to purchase.

Remember, guarantees are only as good as the Company's Code of Ethics and existence.

Selecting Floor Rugs

Rugs accessorize rooms uniting furniture ensemble, architectural features and objet d'art.

When purchasing a rug we must consider the following:-

1. **Budget** to be determined by the characteristics, quality, size and composition of the rug.
2. Style traditional or contemporary, Turkish or Kelim?
3. Size should accommodate all furniture within the room as shown in the diagram below.

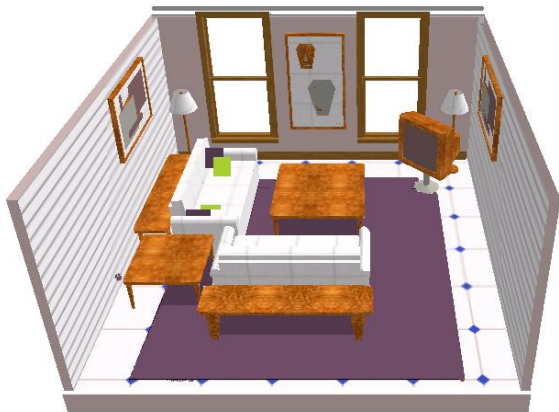


Illustration demonstrating recommended placement and extent of a floor rug.

Each furniture item can be partially or fully accommodated on the rug. The rug may or may not cover the entire floor, this is not so important.

If two rugs are required within the room accommodating two functions, the colours should relate.

4. Function of the room may be formal dining requiring a formal more collectable rug, or casual family eating area, requiring a less expensive, more casual but robust rug.



Two rugs sharing a common space with colours harmonizing



A formal living room with tiled floor enhanced in colour and softness with the addition of a rug.

5. The age of the occupants may be elderly preferring a quieter, more traditional conservative floor rug or younger having a high key design in bright colours which may date.

Therefore a less expensive machine made lesser quality wool or polystyrene rug would be recommended.

6. At what time of the day or night is the room used? Will there be intense sunlight in the room during

the day exposing the rug to ultraviolet rays and possible fading.

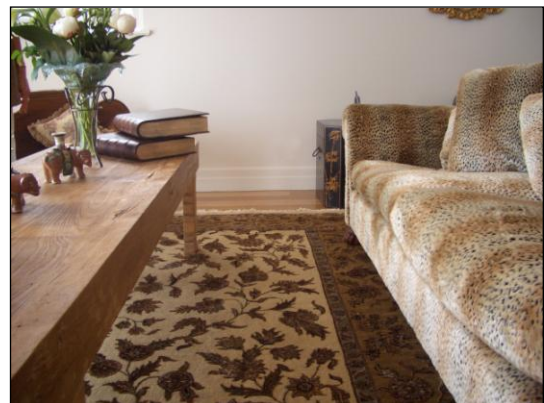
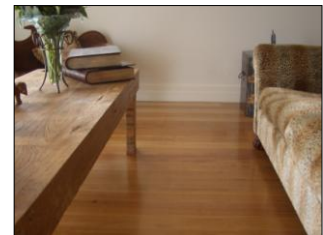
7. Is it a summer or winter room as this may determine the design preferred to suit the décor and furnishings?

If a casual summer room, then a flat weave rug may be more suitable and if adjoining external areas soiling could be an issue.

8. Colours are best when harmonizing with interior furnishings and finishes, and exteriors when adjoining outside recreational spaces.

Below are examples of hard floor coverings overlaid with rugs.

* * * * *



Photographs kindly supplied by
Jenny Jones Rugs
Stirling Road, Claremont, Western Australia.