



What You Always Wanted to Know...

If you should find that your question is not answered here it probably means your question is rather more specialized, in which case we would request that you contact your dealer or manufacturer.

Is it called laminate or laminate flooring?

The proper name is laminate flooring. The word laminate (from the Latin lamina, meaning a thin layer) literally means layers that are pressed together. Although laminates are used in different areas such as the furniture industry, the word laminate in everyday language generally refers to laminate flooring.

How can I tell the quality of a laminate floor?

When buying laminate flooring, always make sure that the wear class in accordance with European standard EN 13329 and the CE marking are shown on the packaging. These symbols indicate a high quality standard and that the laminate flooring has undergone thorough testing to determine suitability for everyday use. The EPLF's logo "Quality and innovation made in Europe" is another indicator of tested quality.

The CE marking = security:

This is a widely-recognised product marking complying with EU law, created to protect end users in Europe. The corresponding ruling ensures that a product may only be launched onto the market if it complies with the provisions of all applicable EU directives. As far as laminate flooring is concerned, strict requirements are set mainly for emissions/fire behaviour and slip resistance.

Wear classes = quality:

In compliance with European standard EN 13329, laminate flooring marketed in Europe must be labelled with protected symbols known as wear classes. These give information on the load bearing capacity, indicating in what areas a specific type of flooring is recommended for use. Products undergo continuous standardised testing to check that they

conform to this standard and to ensure high quality and reliability.

See: [Wear classes PDF](#)

How is laminate flooring laid?

The most important thing to consider in laying laminate flooring is the nature of the subfloor on which it is being laid. Is it even enough and sufficiently dry? For screed floors a vapour barrier will be required. This prevents any residual moisture from the subfloor forcing its way upwards. A PE sheet, for example, designed for the purpose and available from dealers and retailers, is ideally suitable as a vapour barrier. In addition, you will also require a separating layer in order to reduce footstep sound. Laminate flooring can be laid not just on screed floors, however, but on existing old floors as well such as, e.g. wood, stone, ceramic, plastic, or similar. It is imperative, however, that you comply with the specific information and specifications of the manufacturer when doing so!

Modern laminate flooring with click systems makes it far easier to lay a laminate floor these days. First, set out two to three lines of the panels. The first panel in a line should be at least 40 cm long. Insert wedges to make sure you have the required gap of 10 mm to the wall. Then calculate 'what is the best way of accommodating the width of the room'. The panels in the last line should not be less than 5 cm in width, i.e. it may be necessary to shorten the panels in the first line. Then click all the panels together until you have laid the whole floor. If the laminate floor exceeds eight to ten meters in either width or length you will need to insert an expansion joint. Once the floor has been completely laid you can then fit the skirtings, which are either screwed in place or snap-fitted depending on the system.

Can laminate flooring be laid on carpets?

According to the information supplied by manufacturers, carpets do not form a suitable base because the pile layer in the carpet gives way excessively under load. The joints in click systems, in particular, can be subjected to extreme loads. It is advisable to contact the manufacturer of the laminate flooring in each case for advice

Can laminate flooring be laid on tiles?

If the tile surface is suitably even and meets the requirements for laminate flooring in terms of the subfloor (see above) then it is in principle possible. Any unevenness or variations in height in the tile surface can be evened out with an insulation mat. Contact with your manufacturer to check on your specific case

Can laminate flooring be laid on floors with under-floor heating?

Laminate flooring can also be laid on a hot water underfloor heating system if it is installed correctly. The laminate flooring offers good resistance to heat transmission and permits the hot water underfloor heating system to be run highly efficiently. The insulation mat, however, must be the right type for the underfloor heating system – it is imperative that the resistance to heat transmission is not too high.

For electric underfloor heating systems it is essential that you first check the suitability of the laminate flooring for the system. The maximum surface temperature of the laminate flooring when laid must never be permitted to exceed 26 degrees Celsius since this may lead to unsightly swelling of joints and arching. It is therefore essential that you check with your manufacturer first. As a general rule, technical advice should always be sought before laying laminate flooring on electric underfloor heating.

Does laminate flooring have to be laid in a certain direction?

The overall visual appearance of the laminate flooring created by the individual panels is dependent on the direction in which they are laid in the room relative to the incidence of light and the main direction from which they are viewed. The direction of laying can influence the subjective appreciation of the size of the room, i.e. perceived space. It is therefore advisable to ensure that the direction of laying and incidence of light are identical when laying the floor.

How big should the edge/expansion joints be?

The total area of laminate flooring elements can change with changes in climate. It is therefore imperative that you allow for edge joints of at least 10 mm or more in accordance with the manufacturer's/supplier's specifications and subject to the area involved.

There must always be a gap between the total floor unit created out of the individual laminate flooring elements and all fixed building components around it (walls, door frames, supply lines, pillars, etc.), i.e. an edge joint which provides sufficient leeway for the laminate flooring to move without coming into contact with those fixed building components.

The laminate flooring arches. What can be done?

If the laminated flooring becomes undulated (arches) this will generally be because the floor does not have enough room to move at one or more points in the room. This is normally the result of a laying error, e.g. lack of or inadequate expansion joints. If you are good at DIY you can proceed as follows, otherwise you should contact your floor layer.

1. Remove all skirtings (including the connecting rails) and check that there is a gap between the laminate floor and the walls all round.
2. If there is a door stopper, check that this does not press the laminate floor down and that there is sufficient space all around the screw holding the stopper in place – a hole is always drilled through the laminate floor (approx. 20 mm) and the stopper then fixed to the screed floor.
3. Check all heating pipes where these run through the laminate floor and the screed floor. The laminate flooring needs space to move here as well.
4. Never screw any parts (e.g. feet for radiators) directly on the laminate floor to connect with the screed floor.
5. If the laminate floor has been laid flush to a section of wall, cut away approx. 1 cm with a shadow gap saw. Other parts must be reworked by hand with a sharp firmer chisel.

6. Once the laminate floor has been "freed up" at all points it should normally flatten out again within one or two days.
7. As a general rule it is important that you act quickly otherwise there is a risk of permanent damage to the floor.

Is an underlay necessary for a laminate floor?

The laminate boards, the underlay and the subfloor should be viewed together as a "complete floor system". Even a high-quality laminate floor can only demonstrate its merits if the underlay functions properly as part of the flooring system.

Because it forms the interface between the laminate floor and the subfloor, an underlay has important functions to fulfil, i.e. ensuring that an installation can be carried out professionally by levelling out localised unevenness of the subfloor and thus reducing the stress on the boards where they are connected via the click method.

Underlay gives the overall flooring system permanent protection against the everyday demands of being walked on or the impact of falling objects, as well as against long-term wear caused by heavy furniture. It can also act as an effective barrier against residual rising damp. And finally, the right kind of underlay will enhance the properties of the laminate floor in terms of soundproofing and thermal requirements.

It is not uncommon for unsuitable underlays or installation errors to become a cause for complaint at a later stage. Choosing the right underlay will extend the life of a laminate floor system and optimise its overall performance.

Why is a vapour barrier always necessary?

Manufacturers always recommend the use of a vapour barrier (PE sheet or an insulation layer with aluminium coating) to protect the laminate flooring from rising damp coming from the subfloor. This is particularly important for rooms without cellars and in new buildings.

Is it possible to replace single floor panels?

Professionals can replace badly damaged flooring elements so well that it is not possible to tell the difference visually within the floor as a whole. Special suction units are available for lifting (suctioning) the individual panels up and out of the floor, after which the new panel can then be inserted. For repairing areas of minor damage on the floor, companies offer their own repair kits.

What is laminate flooring made of?

Laminate flooring is over 80% wood: Wood fibres, sometimes wood chips, pulp derived from wood (paper). Wood derivatives can be found in all three layers of the laminate floor: 1 Decorative paper + overlay (wear layer), 2 core layer, 3 stabilizing layer. With the exception of the core layer each of these layers is impregnated with synthetic resin (e.g. melamine resin). These are pressed onto the core layer at high pressure and high temperature.

Coverings made of synthetic resin have been used for decades in the production of kitchen and laboratory furniture, office furnishing and shop-fitting. The materials are of a high-quality, are non-wearing, food-safe and are outstanding when it comes to care and cleaning. Laminate floors have a sealed surface which is impenetrable to dust or dirt. This makes them extremely hygienic, easy to maintain and particularly suitable for allergy sufferers.

EU-certified laminate floors are predominantly manufactured from renewable raw materials and are completely free from plasticisers. The main components of the boards are wood fibres and pulp sourced from wood in the form of top-quality special paper.

They carry recognised seals of approval verifying the sustainable origin of the wood pulp used. To protect human health and the environment, all material components are guaranteed to comply with REACH, the rigorous EU European Chemicals Regulation.

Wood is classed as a renewable resource – an environmentally-friendly and sustainable product that can even be recycled.

Does laminate flooring emit formaldehyde? Is it harmful to the environment?

Like all wood-based products laminate flooring also contains the substance formaldehyde, which can be found in the natural environment and is also produced by the human body, and which can be emitted to the indoor air retroactively. The amount of possible emissions, however, is absolutely minimal and falls within the range of "normal background levels" in room air, according to a report by the Fraunhofer Wilhelm-Klauditz-Institut für Holzforschung (WKI) Braunschweig. This is comparable with emission levels from natural wood and is well below the legally permissible limit of 0.1 ppm (i.e. 0.12 mg/m³ of air), the so-called E1 value. Against this background, therefore, laminate flooring is suitable for use without reservation even in sensitive areas such as children's rooms and kindergartens, according to the WKI.

WKI Environmental Report

What is the correct way to dispose of laminate flooring and can it be recycled?

Disposal is no problem whatsoever. Pieces left over from laying and any other individual pieces can be disposed of along with normal household waste. Where complete floors are taken up, however, these should be taken directly to the waste disposal site. Since laminate flooring is composed of over 80 percent wood, it can be burnt without reservation just like other wood-based products. Thanks to new technologies it is now also possible to recycle laminate flooring. Reduced to chips or fibres, 85 percent of the mass of a laminate flooring product can be returned to the production process. As culture substrates they can even be used in agriculture and landscaping.

What kinds of decorative coverings does laminate flooring come with?

Laminate flooring is available with a wide diversity of decorative coverings. Wood reproduction decorative coverings are highly popular, as are reproduction stone and tile decorative coverings. Everything is possible. Be it beech, oak, elm, alder, cherry, walnut or teak – virtually every type of wood can be faithfully reproduced with available printing methods. And the decorative coverings on laminate flooring come closer to their models in nature all the time: One can almost "feel" the structure of the wood on a laminate flooring board. For stone and tiles there is a choice of, e.g. marble, graphite, slate or travertine, and stone decorative coverings are now more authentic than ever – with or without joints. In addition to wood and stone/tiles there are also a wide range of individual fantasy decorative coverings available too.

Is laminate flooring hygienic?

Thanks to its sealed surface laminate flooring is extremely hygienic. The surface coating, which is made of a particularly hard material (melamine resin), prevents dirt and bacteria from penetrating the floor. However, laminate flooring is not just hygienic it is also extremely hard-wearing. You can even stub out a cigarette on laminate flooring without damaging the surface. The wear resistance of the floor is one of the reasons why it is a popular choice for commercial schemes as well, and in retail outlets, fitness studios, etc. But these qualities are also an advantage in the home, e.g. for the stairwell or in children's rooms.

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The price of laminate floors can range from around €8 - €40 per m², but as with any product, the maxim here is "You get what you pay for." Put simply, the better the quality of the floor, the higher the price. A laminate floor with integrated footfall sound insulation and hydrophobic edge treatment (special edge protection against the ingress of moisture) will definitely come at a price, whereas a straightforward laminate floor without these extra features will be much less expensive. However, you should beware of cheap products! Often these do not meet even the minimum standards and requirements laid down in laminate flooring standard EN 13329.

What does laminate flooring cost?

Laminate flooring is offered in a wide range of prices. As for all products the maxim is "You get what you pay for". In other words, the better the quality of the floor and the technical equipment, the higher the price. A laminate flooring product with integrated footstep sound insulation and edge water repellent finishing (special edge protection against moisture penetration) will certainly be more expensive than a simpler laminate flooring product without such additional features. However, be careful of cheap products! Make sure to check if they meet the minimum standards as set out in the EN 13329 standard on laminate flooring.

How do I find out which is the right laminate floor for my application?

First, consider where the floor is to be laid! Is the laminate flooring to be laid in the bedroom, in the living room or in the stairwell? It goes without saying that the floor in the stairwell will be exposed to more use than in the bedroom, for example. To take this into account, the EN 13329 standard on laminate flooring specified so-called load and traffic categories.

The wear class shown on the product packaging provides information on how resilient your laminate floor is. Wear classes 21-23 are intended for home use, whilst wear classes 31-34 are suitable for heavily frequented commercial areas. So the higher the wear class, the heavier the loading the floor can withstand.

For the home there are three load and traffic categories: 21 = moderate (e.g. bedrooms), 22 = normal (e.g. living rooms), 23 = heavy (e.g. stairwells). These categories are indicated on the packaging in the form of pictograms. Look out for them when you buy!

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How do I care for my laminate flooring?

You can remove dust and dirt quickly and reliably with a brush or a vacuum cleaner suitable for hard floors. Wipe with a very slightly damp cloth from time to time, i.e. wring the cloth out thoroughly first. Take care to ensure that no water penetrates the joints! Since the core layer of the laminate flooring is made of wood, water will cause unsightly swelling of the joints. The most suitable cleaner to be added to the water used for wiping over is laminate flooring cleaner available from most retailers. Caution! Never use floor wax or polish! They do not adhere to the resin-impregnated surface of the laminate flooring and will cause unsightly marks, streaks and lines.

Data Sheet on Cleaning

What is an EPD and what significance does it have for laminate floors?

One of the impressive features of laminate flooring is its excellent life cycle assessment with extremely positive values for primary energy consumption and global warming potential. It also excels when it comes to indoor air quality assessment. Proof of this can be seen in evidence-based EPDs (Environmental Product Declarations). EPDs provide a strong argument in favour of laminate floors for anyone looking to choose a new floor with environmental impact and sustainability in mind, whether for private or public/commercial use.

EPDs are assigned by the IBU (German Institute for Construction and the Environment) in Berlin and are used mainly by architects and planners as key fundamental documents for sustainable building. Technical advances in the field of laminate products make it necessary to update EPDs on a regular basis.

What they entail: EPDs document the ecological characteristics of building products, thereby creating reliable underlying data for the ecological assessment of buildings in accordance with DIN EN 15978 (Sustainability of construction work - Assessment of environmental performance of buildings - Calculation method). Environmental Product Declarations contain statements on the use of energy and resources, plus the extent to which a product contributes (under certain circumstances) to the greenhouse effect, acidification, overfertilisation, destruction of the ozone layer and smog formation. They also include information about the technical properties necessary for assessing the performance of the construction product in the building – such as its life span, thermal and sound insulation or the impact on the quality of indoor air.

In 2009, the EPLF was one of the first associations in the floor covering industry to kick-start the development of EPD Environmental Declarations, thereby paving the way to increased transparency and product security for the end user. In accordance with ISO 14025, there have been internationally-valid EPD templates since then for the products made by EPLF group members.