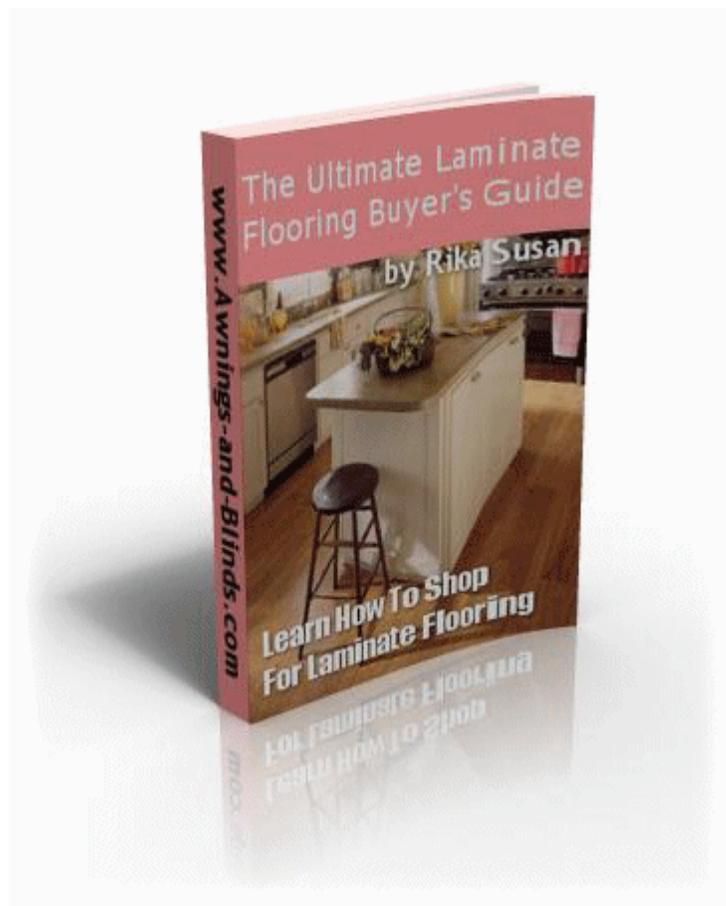


# The Ultimate Laminate Flooring Buyer's Guide



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# **The Ultimate Laminate Flooring Buyer's Guide**

## **Learn How To Shop For Laminate Flooring**

by Rika Susan

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## Chapter 1

# What Is Laminate Flooring?

Laminate flooring installation is creating an unheard of do-it-yourself buzz in the home improvement industry. Thanks to the glueless, easy installation technology, home remodeling rookies turn into flooring aficionados overnight. However, the diversity of ranges, qualities, designs and pricing structures can fluster a weak-kneed novice trying to decipher laminate flooring lingo.

The first question you may ask, is what exactly is laminate flooring? Laminate flooring tiles or planks look very much like hardwood planks. It usually consists of four or five bonded or fused layers. For the bottom layer, melamine is used as reinforcement. This substance is partly responsible for the stability of the floor. Its other main function is to protect the all-important core of the floor from moisture.



The second layer is the medium or high density fiberboard core with a thickness of between 6 and 12mm, impregnated with sealing substances or resins. These resins give the plank the hardness that makes the innovative tongue and groove technology possible.

In the third layer you will find the design. This is a detailed photograph that gives each plank its authentic real wood or stone tile appearance. The final layer of the laminate tile or plank is what is known as the wear layer. Here you will find a mixture of cellulose paper and melamine plastic resins. This combination gets a durable aluminum oxide coating. You want the best wear layer you can afford, as

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this is where the resistance to staining, moisture, scratches, and fading comes in.

In some instances, such as with the laminates in the Alloc Flooring range, an extra thick Kraft paper layer is fitted between the design layer and the core of the laminate flooring tile or plank. In this case the core is a uniquely engineered Aqua Resist fiberboard that has superb moisture resisting properties.

Two types of pressure is used in the manufacturing of a laminate flooring tile or plank. Direct pressure of around 300 pounds per square inch comes into play in the less expensive ranges. With the direct pressure method all the layers are fused together in one step.

If you have the budget for it, rather opt for high pressure planks where a slightly different process is used and pressure of up to 1300 pounds per square inch is applied. Here the craft paper sheets are glued together along with the design layer. This is then glued to the core of the plank. Only then is everything fused or bonded together under high pressure. With this method you can be sure of a more durable plank with improved moisture resistance.

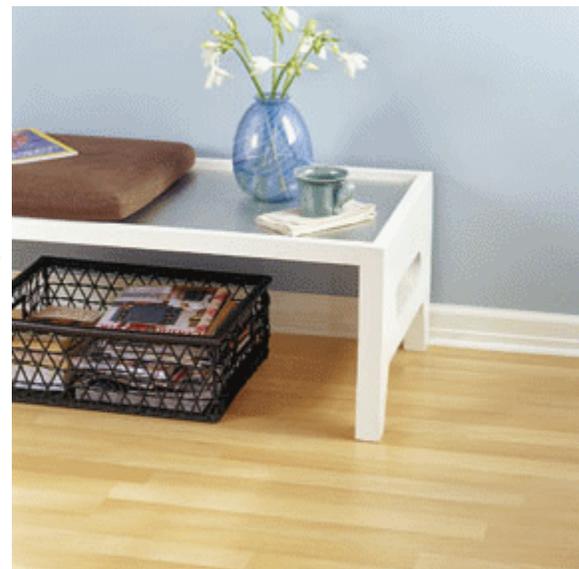
Some ranges have superior moisture resistance and are suitable for use in bathrooms and kitchens. Some manufacturers, such as Formica Flooring, supply lines strong enough to cope with any kind of water damage.

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## Chapter 2

# Why Is Laminate Flooring A Home Improvement Winner?

So, you have qualified for a home equity loan and decided to use the funds to transform your home into a mansion with the stylish, gleaming hardwood laminate floors you have heard so much about. What exactly do you need to know before rolling up your sleeves? How do you sniff out the best laminate flooring service? How do you know what the difference is between Pergo Flooring and the laminates of [Armstrong Flooring](#)? How do you distinguish between the qualities of Wilsonart Flooring, Mohawk Flooring, and Woodmere Laminate Flooring? Do you opt for the most popular brand or the most expensive range? Is a discount laminate flooring installation an option?



Thanks to new technology memories of messy, sticky, time-consuming [laminate flooring installations](#) are thankfully fading into the distance. These home remodeling projects have become a snap with the innovative tongue and groove planks that simply click together to create a stable, floating floor. Laminate hardwood floor installations are now engineered to come with the authentic look of real wood, complete with grain patterns and a realistic weathered texture. Even ceramic tile and stone tile looks are now available compliments of the groutless, glueless laminate flooring service industry. Why is laminate flooring installation one of the fastest growth areas in the home improvement industry?

**Low-Maintenance:** Overloaded parents juggling to keep up in today's fast-paced

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world, love the low-maintenance, easy-care qualities of laminate flooring. A damp mop or brushless vacuum takes care of most flooring chores.

**Durable:** The technology that goes into the engineering of laminate flooring has improved to such an extent that these ranges are now extremely durable and robust. Many of these floors will retain their looks for 20 or 30 years.

**Stain-Resistant:** If you have kids and pets, you will be happy to know that laminate flooring services offer products that are highly stain resistant. Spots can be cleaned with dedicated laminate flooring cleaning products, or something as simple as an acetone nail polish remover. However, never experiment with cleaning solutions before checking with your flooring supplier. Using the wrong product may void your warranty.

**UV Protected:** The flooring finishes are made to be fade resistant. When you move furniture, there will be no tell-tale dull spots or lines on the flooring.

**Sub-Floor Suitability:** One of the boons of a laminate flooring installation is that it can be done over virtually any existing flooring. The two exceptions are carpeting and real hardwood on concrete.

**All Grade Levels:** A [laminate flooring installation](#) is workable on any grade level.

**Impact Resistant:** If you choose wisely, you will find that the laminate flooring service industry offers products with superior impact resistance. A quality floor copes admirably with the common household mishaps.

**Authentic Real Wood:** A laminate floor can create an atmosphere with the same warmth and texture of real hardwood, at a fraction of the price. These days, many laminate flooring planks even come with beveled edges to bring it even

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closer to an authentic look. You will even find ranges with the typical weathered real wood appearance.

**Do It Yourself:** Installing laminate flooring is one of the easiest and most gratifying projects a do it yourself novice can tackle. The click-'n-go concept has taken the home remodeling world by storm.

**Rapid Replacement:** In case of a mishap, a section of the laminate flooring can be replaced. You won't have to redo a whole floor. To allow for this possibility, always keep an unopened box of flooring planks in storage.

Renovation rookies love the laminate flooring service industry, because the flooring is so simple to install and progress is so noticeable. This is one project even an all-thumbs first-timer can attempt with confidence. A gleaming ready-to-use floor will reward you for your labor in as little as 8 hours. With the snap together designs, the joints are almost invisible.

Do your homework, stick to the laminate flooring installation and maintenance instructions, and your floor will retain its elegant looks for many years. With warranties of between 15 and 30 years, you can be sure that these ranges are made to last.

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## Chapter 3

# How To Judge Laminate Flooring Pricing

Once you get your flooring toes wet, you will soon notice that the pricing structure of a [laminate flooring service](#) isn't always an accurate indicator of value and quality. A wealth of other factors need to be considered before you take the plunge. A pricey range isn't necessarily a superior product.

At the other end of the spectrum, a cheap or discount laminate flooring service may turn out to be extremely costly, due to sub-standard quality and inferior core strength. Get a good overview of the prices of well-known manufacturers, before you decide on a budget. Even within a particular brand's lines you will find vast price differences. Luckily many manufacturers include more affordable lines in their laminate flooring collections. Check that budget lines will be suitable for your specific needs, for instance some of the less expensive ranges can't be used in a bathroom.

Pricing has to do with the thickness of the laminate flooring, the pressure system used during manufacturing, and the quality of the wear layer. If the underlayment is pre-attached, the flooring range is likely to come with a higher price tag. The AC Rating (*see Chapter 10*) also plays an important role in pricing. The warranty period is another factor that influences price. The more expensive the flooring range, the higher its moisture resistance level should be.



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