

# Quick Facts – Laminates

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- Laminate floors come in either planks or square tiles. They are designed to look like flooring such as wood, stone or ceramic tiles. The look is created by printing a very high resolution image on a print film layer that is protected by a tough, durable melamine wear layer. The strong core of laminate floors is high-density fibreboard (HDF).
  - While laminate flooring can look like hard-surface stone, ceramic or wood, it is soft, comfortable and quiet under foot.
  - Laminate flooring was developed in Scandinavia in the early 1980s as an offshoot of melamine laminate countertops. Reinforced laminate that was about 10 times stronger than countertops was developed for use on floors.
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- Laminate plank or tile “floating” floors can be installed directly over existing floors or subfloors without gluing them down. This saves time and installation costs. They can be walked on as soon as they are installed.
  - Laminate floors look like real wood but are about ¼ of the cost of wood.
  - Laminate floors are easy to clean and maintain. There is no need to refinish, sand or restain them. They can be cleaned easily by vacuuming or dust-mopping.
  - In homes, laminate floors are popular for kitchens and bathrooms. They can also be used in living rooms, dining rooms, play rooms, entrance ways. Laminate floors can be used in any high-traffic area where there is a need for a durable floor that does not require high maintenance.
  - When laminate was first developed in the 1980s, wood floors still had to be installed by a professional floor installer. Laminate flooring became very popular after it was developed and marketed because it is cheaper than wood, and could be installed by homeowners themselves.
  - Laminate floors are hypoallergenic because they do not collect dust whereas dust accumulates in carpet fibres, which can be a health hazard for people with allergies.
  - Laminate floors for residential use were introduced in Europe and Europe is still the dominant player in the manufacture of laminate floors. Eighty-seven per cent of world production of laminate flooring is in Europe.

- The largest North American producer of laminate flooring is Uniboard Surfaces Inc., a subsidiary of Uniboard Canada Inc. Uniboard manufactures 140 million square feet of laminate flooring per year.
- The largest laminate flooring plant in North America is in Laval, Quebec. Uniboard Surfaces Inc. opened the 260,000-square-foot facility in August 2001.
- In North America, laminate was first used (commercially) more than 25 years ago as a surface for bowling lanes in bowling centres, and as elevated floors in computer rooms. Bowling alleys used specialized construction to withstand impact. The wear layer used the same construction that is found in modern laminate floors. Today, laminate floors are popular for commercial use in stores, office buildings, hotels, hospitals and schools.
- Glueless laminate “floating” floors that can be installed by homeowners themselves are easier to install than glue-down laminate floors because they do not require professional installation or special adhesives and tools. Uniclic<sup>®</sup> tiles and planks are designed and manufactured to minimize gapping that can be a problem if glue-down laminate floors are not installed properly.