

FLOORING BUYING GUIDE

Here at Barrow Clark, we recognise that all the different flooring options available can seem overwhelming, which is why we have created this buying guide to help you find the perfect flooring for your home! Explore all the different types and styles of flooring from carpets to traditional wood flooring to patterned LVT. We offer something for everyone, whatever your needs or style preferences, helping you to transform your space!



CARPETS:

Types/ Construction:

Woven: Great for more high traffic areas, due to their longevity.

- **Axminster** – A highly durable carpet created by weaving the fibre through the backing material, creating small 'u' tufts. This method is great for creating intricate patterns, with a vibrant mix of colours.
- **Wilton** – Wilton carpets are made similarly to Axminster, but one continuous fibre is woven through and then cut, with the option of creating different textured effects. A high-quality carpet that is even more highly durable, but less pattern options are available than with Axminster.

Tufted: Comfortable and durable underfoot, with a range of textures available.

- **Twist/ Twist Pile/ Twisted** – A highly twisted yarn is used to create a textural finish, and then the top of each fibre is cut to create a soft underfoot feel, making it a practical and popular design. The hardwearing nature of this technique also makes it great for more high-traffic areas in the home, such as hallways.
- **Berber/ Berber Twist** – The name originates from the handmade weaving of the Berber Tribe, the style of which influences the creation of Berber carpets today. Uncut loops of different fibres are blended together to create a distinctive, flecked effect that is both hardwearing yet comfortable underfoot.

- **Loop/ Loop Pile** (Multi Level/ Level Loop) – Yarn is formed into loops that can either be all the same height, or different heights, and this method helps to create a carpet that is both practical and durable. The natural, relaxed style is great for adding a homely feel to your space.
- **Overtuft** – For more design flexibility, an overtuft carpet is when a pattern is tufted upon a plain base, creating a stunning carpet at a lower price than a traditional Axminster.
- **Cut Pile** – The loops of the pile on this type of carpet are cut to create a level, smooth finish with a soft underfoot feel that helps to make your space more inviting and comfortable.
- **Velvet/ Velour/ Plush** – The short, level cut-pile blends together to create a luxurious carpet finish to create that cosy space within your home. The decadence of this carpet is great for lower traffic areas, as it will likely wear more easily.
- **Saxony** – A luxurious deep pile makes this carpet sensuously soft underfoot, bringing elegance and comfort into your home. Great for creating a cosy feel in spaces such as bedrooms but, like with velvet, saxony is better suited to lower traffic areas, as it will flatten quicker.

Carpet Fibres:

Natural Fibre: A great choice for a lower environmental impact, with sumptuous qualities.

- **Wool** – The natural characteristics of wool make this a luxuriously soft choice, bringing warmth and comfort underfoot. If you are looking for something sustainable and long-lasting, wool is an excellent option for your home! It is both durable and hypoallergenic, whilst also having the added benefit of being naturally flame retardant. Wool carpets are well suited to high-traffic areas, although it is important to note that they are not as stain resistant as synthetic carpets. Though often deemed to be the more expensive option, the high quality and resilience of wool carpets make them worth the investment! Whilst 100% wool carpets are available, it is also often found blended with synthetic fibres to heighten performance even further.

Synthetic Fibre: Hardwearing and durable, with the benefit of being easy to clean.

- **Polypropylene** – Offering a super soft feel whilst also being both easy to clean and stain resistant, polypropylene carpets are a great choice for those with young children! The tough and resilient properties mean they can be used in all areas of the home, including high-traffic areas. They can however be more prone to crushing.
- **Nylon** – If you are looking for something that is both hardwearing and easy to maintain, then nylon could be a great option for you! It offers resilience and durability, making it suitable for high-traffic areas of your home. However, because of this, nylon is less soft than other man-made fibres.
- **Polyester** – The soft, underfoot feel of polyester carpets and texture of the pile makes them look and feel the closest to natural carpets with all the benefits of synthetic carpets. They are easy to clean and durable, as well as being long-lasting in low traffic areas of the home. They are however not as suited to high-traffic areas, as they are more likely to wear and fray over time.



LVT:

What is it? LVT stands for 'Luxury Vinyl Tiles' and this flooring offers a realistic alternative to wood and tiles, without the practical drawbacks. It is easy to maintain and clean, whilst also being either waterproof or water-resistant, making it a solid and practical alternative for bathrooms and kitchens, providing you with comfort and warmth underfoot. Therefore, it is particularly good for homes with young children, as it provides a safe space to explore without compromising on style. The realistic surface textures of LVT flooring offers authentic character which reflects the natural materials in both look and feel. This will last for years to come, with the durable and resilient properties available in both plank and tile formats, providing you with a wealth of design possibilities!

Types of LVT:

Dryback/ Stick-down/ Glue-down: Secured with adhesive directly to the subfloor, giving you the option to choose how each tile is arranged, thus providing the highest level of design flexibility. You can create your own pattern and even add borders, creating a stunning statement in your home! This installation also makes it easy to replace individual planks and tiles if needed.

Click/ Interlocking: The easiest to lay out of all the types, click LVT does not require any adhesive, instead each tile clicks together to create a perfect joint. This makes it hassle-free and quick to install, as it can be installed over most existing subfloors. The interlocking mechanism does however mean that design options are limited.

Loose-lay: Featuring a special grip backing, loose-lay LVT requires minimal adhesive, making it quick and easy to install. It can be installed as a floating floor over most subfloors but, unlike click LVT, offers more design flexibility, allowing you to make the space your own! This installation makes it easy to replace individual planks and tiles if needed. Loose-lay LVT also features an ergonomic design and cushioned underfoot feel, making it a comfortable flooring solution for your home!

Rigid Core: Offering maximum stability, rigid core LVT includes a solid layer within its construction, allowing it to be installed over most hard floors or subfloors as it will hide imperfections. This improves the durability even further, as it reduces any wear issues. It is quick and easy to install as it clicks and links together, with no adhesive required. A hassle-free, sturdy solution for your home, although it is important to note that, due to the interlocking mechanism, design options are limited.

Construction:

Base Layer: The backing for LVT flooring is made from high density PVC and is made to either have adhesive added to it or as the base layer for click and loose-lay flooring. This layer differs according to the distinct types and the function it needs to play.

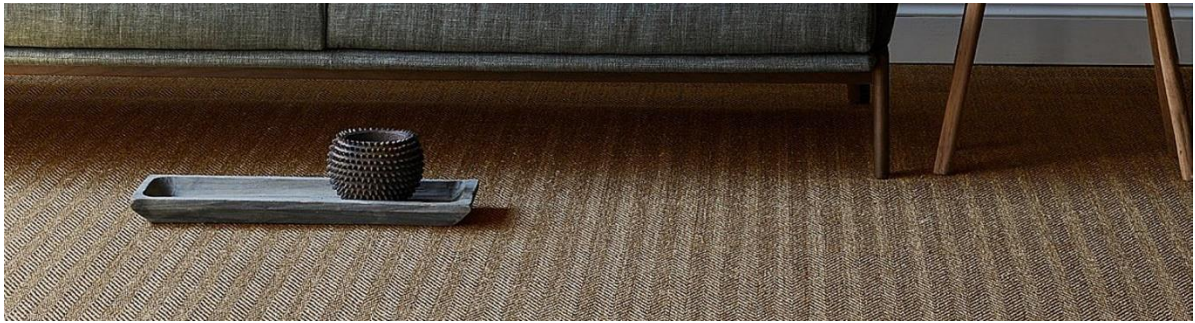
Rigid Core: For rigid core flooring, this layer is added for maximum stability as it is made from solid PVC that is great for placing over less even flooring as it does not show imperfections. The less flexible design also helps to avoid wear issues, making it more long-lasting.

Fibre Glass/ PVC Layers: All LVT flooring includes several layers to build further stability, and whilst these can vary between products, these are often made up of Fibre Glass and PVC. Together, these add flexibility and strength to the flooring.

Decor Layer: This layer is the one that really brings the flooring to life, as it is where the design is added!

Wear Layer: An important layer in LVT construction, the wear layer thickness will differ between products as it decides the durability and performance. For instance, a thicker layer will be needed for commercial areas than for a residential space.

Top Coating: Made from PUR or aluminium oxide, it helps to protect against stains and scratches, as well as enhancing the anti-slip quality.



NATURAL FLOORING:

What is Natural Flooring? If you are looking for a sustainable and hardwearing floorcovering for your home, then natural flooring is a great option to consider. Made from the finest quality materials, it is highly durable and available in many stunning weave designs, making it perfect for high-traffic areas of the home. The gorgeous tactile finish can however take some adjusting to as it is not so soft as carpet, although the different plant fibres will differ in terms of softness. The environmentally friendly option of woven matting is unique and makes an eye-catching addition to your home!

Materials:

Sisal: Hardwearing and resilient, sisal can be woven into a variety of fine and chunky styles for an exotic floorcovering in your home. Made from the sisal plant, it is a strong material which has a great advantage in that it is able to be dyed and thus is available in a range of natural and brighter colours! This provides the opportunity to create a space that reflects your style and suits your own interior design. However, whilst sisal is strong, it is rougher underfoot and difficult to clean as it can easily stain.

Seagrass: The sturdiest of the materials, seagrass is a coastal meadow which offers a rustic finish as a flooring option in your home. It is resistant to both watermarks and stains, making it a tough and durable material that is great for more high-traffic areas. This does however mean that it is only available in a limited, natural colour palette as it is resistant to dyes. In terms of comfort, the material itself is softer than coir, making it a more comfortable experience underfoot. There are limited patterns available as it is difficult to weave, but overall seagrass offers a stunning, distinctive touch to your space.

Coir: Extremely hardwearing, coir is a highly durable material made from the fibres of coconut husk. It offers a rustic look without the need for lots of maintenance, making it great for more high-traffic areas. Coir is however rough underfoot and only available in limited weave patterns.

Jute: The softest underfoot, jute is a better flooring choice for spaces such as bedrooms as it offers a silkier feel. This makes it a great option if you are looking to make your home more sustainable but still want the more comfortable feel that a standard carpet would give you, as jute is the more luxurious of the natural flooring options. From the jute plant, it can be woven into fine and chunky carpets to complete your space. It is however less durable than sisal, and thus not as suitable for high-traffic areas of the home.



NON-SLIP FLOORING

What is it? Made from PVC sheet, it is designed as a practical solution to help minimise slip risk, especially in areas where there is a risk of water spillage, for both residential and commercial spaces. The high-performance flooring is both hygienic and easy to clean, whilst offering superior comfort underfoot, with a stud free form. This is great for ease of movement even if barefoot, making it an excellent option for leisure spaces particularly. There are a variety of non-slip flooring options available dependent on the slip resistance required, including dimpled designs or vinyl with added aggregates to help improve traction. These different styles also help to create an aesthetically pleasing finish to your space, for a welcoming and attractive area!

Usage: The hardwearing and durable design makes this a versatile option that is especially great for heavy traffic areas. Often used for healthcare, specialist care and education spaces where there are risks of water spillages or other contaminants, it is also suitable for residential spaces such as bathrooms. With different slip resistance levels, there are even options for continually wet areas to help keep everyone safe!



VINYL

What is it? Available in a wide choice of designs with wood, marble, stone, and patterned styles available to transform your space whilst also offering the practicalities of vinyl flooring. You can choose a more realistic, natural finish or a bolder, modern design, making it a versatile option for your home. Vinyl is a type of cushioned flooring that is warmer and offers a soft touch underfoot, whilst also being hardwearing. This makes it great for busy homes and high traffic areas, particularly in kitchens and bathrooms due to its water-resistant qualities. The surface makes it easy to clean and maintain, helping your space to be hygienic whilst still offering that stylish finish. However, as vinyl is relatively thin compared to other types of flooring, it will show imperfections and wear much more easily, so it is important that the subfloor is smooth, and care is taken with regards to furniture and other items on top of it. With this being done, vinyl flooring offers excellent performance and durability, whilst having the benefit of being more slip resistant. This, alongside the cost effectiveness, makes vinyl a great choice for your home!

Types:

Dryback/ Glue-down/ Stick: A more permanent and durable option for your space, this type of vinyl has to be fixed with adhesive directly to the subfloor, which needs to be smooth and level to ensure no imperfections show. As it is secured, it is less likely to warp, making it much more stable and tough. Although it can be used in all spaces, this option must be used for larger areas which require more than one join.

Loose-lay: This type of installation relies on a friction backing to keep the vinyl in place, allowing it to be installed over existing floors with no adhesive required. This makes it the easiest to lay and replace, although it does need a smooth subfloor to start with to ensure it lays correctly. However, it cannot be used for larger spaces as there can only be one seam.

Construction: As the name suggests, vinyl flooring is mostly made from PVC (polyvinyl chloride), but it is constructed from several different layers to create the cushioned back sheet. The materials can differ between ranges, but the general construction is as follows:

Backing Layer: Made from materials such as foam or polyester, this layer is important for warmth and acoustic properties, as well as providing a base for the flooring itself.

Inner Core: Normally made of fiberglass to add extra stability, this layer provides structure, helping to keep the vinyl flooring flat and prevent warping.

Cushioned Layer: Provides a comfortable underfoot feel as an important part of the construction of vinyl flooring.

Decor Layer: This layer is the one that really brings the flooring to life, as it is where the design is added!

Wear Layer: A key layer in vinyl construction, the wear level determines the durability, helping to protect the flooring from wearing. The thickness will differ between products, with a thicker layer being required for more high-traffic areas.

Top Layer: Offering the shine that is associated with vinyl, this final layer helps to protect the flooring from spills and stains.



LAMINATE

What is it? An extremely durable flooring option, laminate offers a range of unique styles that are full of character. From realistic wood designs that have an authentic feel to bright colours and patterns, there is sure to be something for every home! Available in different plank sizes to suit your space, laminate is quick and easy to install. It can come with or without grooves, with different textures available to reflect nature and add depth to the design. Whilst it offers a natural look and feel, it has the benefit of being easy to clean, making it a great option for more high-traffic areas of the home. However, if used without underlay, it is louder underfoot than flooring such as vinyl, which can be more disrupting to others around. It can also be susceptible to warping, particularly if exposed to excessive moisture underneath, so the subfloor needs to be properly prepared prior to installing. Despite the above, it offers a versatile solution and, with water-resistant or waterproof surfaces now available, it is able to be used in both kitchens and bathrooms. Overall, laminate flooring is resilient, whilst also being comfortable and warm underfoot, offering a stunning look that wears well over time.

Construction:

Top: This finishing layer consists of the printed design, which is then covered with a transparent surface that offers wear, impact, and scratch resistance.

Middle: The core layer of laminate flooring is HDF (high density fibreboard) to help stabilise and strengthen the flooring. It is the thickest layer and is put under high pressure to ensure its longevity.

Base: The backing offers further stability, with moisture resistance to help protect the flooring from warping. It can also offer noise absorption, although an underlay is often used alongside to help with this.



WOODEN FLOORING:

What is it? A timeless flooring option, wood flooring is an investment for a lifetime, offering a stunning addition to your home. Full of natural character and endearing beauty, each piece offers unique knots and grains that no other flooring can fully replicate. Whilst it will wear over time, this is part of the beauty of real wood flooring. The colours will change, and marks will start to show with use, adding a lived-in touch to your home. This is part of the reason wood flooring has remained so popular over the years – it ages gracefully. There are however more things to consider with wooden flooring, as it is easily affected by moisture and heat. Spillages can damage the flooring if not cared for quickly, and regular cleaning is required to keep it looking its best. It can also warp over time with temperature and moisture damage, which is why care needs to be taken to ensure the flooring is well maintained. Whilst it can scratch, particularly with movement of furniture, the unique qualities of wood cannot be rivalled. It exudes elegance and style, with authentic texture and variations in colour that add interest to your home. The outstanding durability of wood means it is very long-lasting, making it a reliable and practical flooring option. It is more sustainable than other options due to the natural materials used and the long lifespan, making it a high-quality choice. Wood flooring brings a sense of nature into your home and provides a neutral base from which you can show your personality, allowing you to decorate exactly to your taste!

Types:

Solid Wood: The more traditional type of wooden flooring, this is where each plank is made from a single, solid piece of wood that is then either glued or nailed down. It is easy to fit, with tongue and groove being used to fix each plank together and create a beautiful, hardwearing floor. The planks themselves will vary in size to create that authentic feel, although it should be noted that these will often be smaller than engineered wood in order to provide that stability. Solid wood flooring is affected by moisture and changes in temperature, which does mean that unfortunately it is not suitable for underfloor heating as it is not stable enough, warping more easily. Expansion gaps must also be considered when fitting, although when it is installed properly it offers a durable solution that will last a lifetime. Solid wood flooring is timeless.

Engineered Wood: A more contemporary choice when it comes to wooden flooring, engineered wood was created for further reliability and stability whilst still offering the authentic feel of real wood. It is constructed from several layers of different materials, which are then engineered together. The top layer is made of real wood and is the wear layer, which is then placed atop a core of cross-layered wood, often softwood or plywood.

The different angles these are placed at help to increase the strength and stability of the flooring, making it more resilient to changes in temperature. This is enhanced further through the base veneer, allowing engineered flooring to be used with underfloor heating. This is a key advantage, but it is important to note that the flooring may still be impacted by changes in temperature and is not waterproof so care still needs to be taken. However, the more stable design allows for longer and wider planks to be created than with solid wood flooring, although there are only certain fixed lengths available to create consistency. In terms of installation, it is able to be nailed or glued, but also can be a loose-lay flooring, floated above the sub floor. Like with solid wood, tongue and groove is used to fix each plank together. The construction used helps to minimise the chance of warping, meaning a lesser expansion gap is required and making it a much more durable option. Overall, this manufactured form is hardwearing, whilst still offering that stunning wood finish.

Finishes: The finish for your wooden flooring helps to enhance the authentic look, whilst also providing further protection. To further the lifespan of your flooring, wooden flooring is also able to be refinished when required. With different styles available, you can choose what best suits your flooring preferences and needs.

Lacquered: A glossy, smooth finish, this creates a hardwearing surface which offers great scratch resistance. It is easy to clean and maintain, although it is tricky to spot repair.

Matt Lacquered: Less shiny than the lacquered finish, it offers a subtle sheen that looks like an oiled finish. The end result is hardwearing and smooth, offering great scratch resistance, whilst also being easy to clean and maintain. However, like the lacquered finish, it is tricky to spot repair.

Oiled: A dulled matt finish, it is a great option if you are looking to further accentuate the patterns in the wood, as it further protects the surface and grains of the wood. It provides great scratch resistance with the chance for retouching small marks without having to oil the entire floor again. This makes it easier to repair, although it does require regular maintenance sooner than the other finishes.