

BEAUTIFUL FLOORS

Timber. Concrete. Carpet. Tiles. What's right for you? Here's a guide to **help you choose**



STEP ONE in any renovation project is always the floor. You build from the ground up, so you need to decide on your floors before anything else. Maybe you can salvage the floor that's already there. Maybe you need to start from scratch. However it happens, your flooring is going to be a major part of your budget, and it's not something like wall paint colours that you can change easily if you grow tired of it. Read on for some info on how to make the right flooring decisions for the rooms in your home.

1. TIMBER

WHITE WASH

People often choose dark wooden floors by default, but blonde wood can be beautiful, imparting a wonderful sense of light and space. It has a Scandi vibe that looks fantastic in light-filled Australian houses. Engineered timber flooring, as shown here, is extremely hardwearing and available in a multitude of woods and finishes. Manufacturers such as Quick-Step have a huge range of engineered timber flooring options, bamboo, too, which is another floorcovering worth considering. Price guide for Quick-Step's engineered timber, such as their Readyflor 3 Strip, from \$61 a sq m, and ARC bamboo, from \$59 a sq m.

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photography James Silverman/Chilli Media

photography marjon hoogervorst/aveerme agency (left); lorenzo nencioni/vega



GO WIDE

Extra-wide boards – shown above in oak – are handsome and contemporary and especially suit large spaces. “Solid oak provides a neutral but warm base to layer materials and finishes over the top,” says interior designer and architect Scott Weston (Swad.com.au). As a more budget-friendly option, you can also get excellent quality vinyl flooring that looks just like wood – for instance, Kardean Designflooring wood-effect floor in WP414 Argen. Price guide for Kardean vinyl: from \$55 to \$110 per m including installation.



RAW/NATURAL

Pull up that carpet and you might find a wooden floor – above, baltic pine – that can be sanded back and stained. (And some patches might need replacing.) “For existing floorboards in older houses, you’ll usually uncover four-inch boards,” says interior designer Derrick Macrae of DM Designs (Dmdesigns.com.au). Another option is to seek out reclaimed timber flooring and have it laid. “Choose carefully, though,” Derrick advises. “Width of the boards will depend on your existing underfloor bearers and support beams.” →

Engineered flooring

Lye-treated **larch board** treated with Brushed White Oil, \$149 to \$251 a sq m depending on length, width and clarity grade. Mafi. Mafi.com.au



2. CONCRETE

PRACTICALITY & STYLE

For structural reasons polished concrete floors are more often found in newer dwellings than old houses – though if you are adding an extension to an old home, polished concrete can be a viable option. If you wanted to paint an existing concrete floor yourself, even with an artwork – this one’s in the home of architect Gaetano Pesce in New York – you could. Then you apply a concrete lacquer, let dry, sand lightly, and buff. This is repeated until you get the desired gloss level.

photo **photography** giorgio possenti/vega

Concrete flooring
The beauty of polished concrete is that you can have it customised to just about any look you like – smooth, rough, high-gloss, textured, embedded with quartz, glass, marble, metal – you name it.



photography birgitta wolfgang drejer/sisters agency

DESIGNER LOOKS

Polished concrete is a great favourite of architects and designers; here, a dramatic concrete “runway” is bordered by tracks of river stones. “It’s virtually maintenance free and you can choose the colour and aggregate finish you like,” Scott Weston says. “It gives a warmth and texture to open-plan spaces and works well with timber joinery and steel materials and finishes. It does however require a reputable concrete company to get the concrete mix and reinforcing mesh right – things can go horribly wrong otherwise.”



HIGH GLOSS

Concrete flooring is expensive, however. Polishing an existing concrete floor will cost \$250 to \$400 a lineal metre. If the existing floor’s not suitable, a layer of concrete with a bonding agent can be added – \$300 a cubic metre. Installing a new polished concrete floor costs approx \$469 a cubic metre. High-gloss concrete floors with block colour (as above) are the ultimate in contemporary sophistication; check out Colourmix.com.au to get an idea of the oxide colours you can choose from. Naturally, adding oxide colours costs more. →

Eco-friendly carpet
 Redbook Green "Dawn Mist" **cut-pile twist** Triexta in 9 Rainclouds, from \$70 a m installed, Godfrey Hirst. Manufactured using Sorona polymer.



3. CARPET

COLOUR BLOCK

Stuck with carpet in your home or rental that is a little outdated? Never fear! Even shades or styles that are not currently "fashionable" can be made to work, with a clever eye and a little careful accessorising. Embrace your quirky carpet by choosing furniture, artwork, accessories and paint colours that accentuate its unique qualities. The unusual hue of this textured carpet works fabulously with the bold colours and retro flavour in the room. If buying new carpets, Scott Weston says not to be afraid of colour. "Coloured carpets really add that element of surprise and delight."

photography richard powers

photography birgitta wolfgang drejer/sisters agency (left); prue ruscoe/taverne agency

PERFECT PLUSH

"There is nothing like a good-quality cut-pile pure wool carpet," says industrial designer Shareen Joel (Sharedesign.com). The luxurious look and feel is achieved by cutting the tops of the fibre loops, so the pile stands upright with an even smooth surface. Wool plush pile carpet can sometimes display temporary shading (from footprints, vacuuming, etc), but its fibre structure makes it durable and hardwearing, so your investment will be sure to last for a long time. Price guide: wool blend, from \$45 a sq m installed; 100% wool, from \$55 sq m installed.

TOUGH CONTENDERS

"We are now often specifying wool/viscose blend carpet," says James Lambrou, interior designer with Mr Mitchell (Mrmitchell.com.au). "It has a really nice contrast of texture and visual interest." On the eco-friendly front, Redbook Green (see far left) and Godfrey Hirst Eco+ carpets are made of Triexta fibre, which is manufactured using a polymer that's a byproduct of the corn industry. Super-hardwearing yet very soft, they are perfect for busy households with pets. For a look like this one, check out the Redbook Green's "Scenic Walk" cut-pile twist, in Pearl. →



4. TILES

NICE NEUTRALS

Neutral tiles are right at home in Australian dwellings. They're versatile and easy on the eye. Case in point: some of the most popular for new-build homes are 600mm x 300mm rectangular travertine full-bodied porcelain tiles from China, as shown above. They're priced from about \$50 a sq m and are extremely hardwearing and easy to maintain. You can also choose digitally printed tiles that replicate the look of wood, stone and other motifs; about \$100 a sq m (see page 128 for a visual).

photography felix forest



photography hotze elisma/taverna agency (left); maree homer

TRADITIONAL PATTERNS

This tessellated 3D-effect "Cubic" design (20cm x 20cm tiles) nods to the work of Dutch graphic designer MC Escher (1898-1972). "There's been a huge shift towards patterned tiles with European, Middle Eastern and Cuban motifs in Australian homes," says Sonya Marish from Jatana Interiors, which stocks some 100 designs – both antique and reproduction. They're going into bathrooms, kitchens, patios, barbecue areas – you name it. Price guide: \$165 a sq m for reproduction, from approx \$380 for antique, Jatanainteriors.com.au

Floor tiles

MR-Light honed or polished **travertine**, \$54.95 a sq m, Amber Tiles. Reproduction **Spanish villa** in Midnight Blue, \$165 a sq m, Jatana Interiors. For stockists, see page 207.

DELUXE GREY

Grey is a good "safe" choice for tiles in kitchen or bathroom. It's a strong basic that goes with any decor style, whether contemporary, as above, or traditional or period or rustic. It always looks deluxe. Grey slate tiles were once popular but they have their drawbacks, being hard to keep clean; the best alternative are grey glazed porcelain tiles, about \$45 a sq m. Companies such as Amber Tiles have loose tiles on display that you can borrow; this is well worth doing so you can see how the light in your home looks on the tiles at different times of the day. 1