

CONSUMER BUYING GUIDE





A Message from Montana's Floor Covering Experts

Thank you for contacting us and requesting this Consumer Guide to Purchasing New Flooring. We hope you find this guide to be very informative and of benefit to you in your pursuit to beautify your life by beautifying your surroundings. Floor covering is one of the biggest purchases you will make in your lifetime. It is also one of the most important, as it will provide the foundation for the interior beauty of your home for years to come.

Many people think that flooring dealers are all the same. That could not be further from the truth! There is a lot of bad information out there with misleading advertising, gimmicky warranties, big box discounters, unethical salespeople, high pressure sales and so on. How can you find a qualified, professional, floor covering expert that is looking out for your best interest? You start by reading this Consumer Guide to Purchasing New Flooring.

We wrote this guide to give you the facts regarding ways to avoid some of these pitfalls. We will go over how to spot and avoid predatory flooring dealers, how to choose the right store for you and how to get the right flooring for your lifestyle. We want your floor covering purchase to be a wonderful experience, not a dreaded headache that can happen when a wrong decision is made. With this

information, you will be able to make a better, more informed, and intelligent decision. All the while, keeping in mind the importance of beautifying your home for years to come.

We have been in business for over 99 years by helping beautify Montana, one home or business at a time. If you have any questions, we are here to help. Do not hesitate to contact us, we would be happy to assist you with your important decision.

Sincerely,

Pierce Flooring
Montana's Premier Floor Covering Experts



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Product Categories

There are lots of different product categories out there to choose from. Each one has its advantages and disadvantages. Your lifestyle will be a big determinant as to what category of flooring will be best suited for your family's needs.

Let's get to it!

Luxury Vinyl

Luxury vinyl planks (LVP) and luxury vinyl tile (LVT) is the fastest-growing product category right now. It is most noted as a waterproof flooring that can easily be installed in kitchen and bath areas with no effect from moisture. There are lots of benefits to luxury vinyl, but it also has some limitations.

Here are some of the **advantages of luxury vinyl**:

- **Ease of maintenance** – It is a very easy floor to maintain. The only requirements are sweeping and mopping with a luxury vinyl cleaner.
- **Design flexibility** – There are lots of choices with looks in wood, ceramic, and stone. There will more than likely be a pattern that will look beautiful in your home.
- **Durability** – They are very durable floors, better than most, but they can be susceptible to scratching from chair legs and items being dragged across them. Always use felt protectors for the legs on chairs and under all furniture. Replace felt protectors regularly, they do wear out.
- **Affordability** – Very affordable floors, usually costing 2 – 3 times less than hardwood, ceramic, or stone.
- **Installation options** – Luxury vinyl can be glued down or laid as a floating floor (eliminating the possible need for new underlayment). Many times, this product is installed by the consumer themselves.
- **Waterproof** – One of the best floors when humidity or moisture is an issue.

Here are some of the **disadvantages of luxury vinyl**:

- **Comfort** - It is still a hard-surfaced product, so it does not have the comfort underfoot of carpet.
- **Wheelchairs** - If it is laid as a floating floor, it is not a good option if wheelchairs will be used on them.
- **Floor prep** - May require extensive floor prep. If being laid as a floating floor, the floor must be level to within 3/16" within a 10' radius. If gluing down, a new underlayment may be required to accommodate the floor.
- **No value to your home** - Even though you get the look of wood, ceramic, or stone, it will not add value to your home. It could however help with the salability of your home.

- **Baseboards in remodels** – If you are remodeling and want to install luxury vinyl, baseboards must be discussed and how they will be handled. Laying luxury vinyl requires an expansion joint of (1/4" – 1/2") along all walls, doors, islands, cabinets, and anything else it would come in contact with. Either the baseboards will need to be removed then reinstalled or replaced, or a quarter round could be used to mask the expansion joint next to the baseboards. Either way, a different look or additional expense will more than likely be required to properly install this product.
- **Expands in direct sunlight** - If the room it is being installed in has a lot of direct sunlight, vinyl tends to expand when it gets hot, therefore buckling of the floor or peaking at seams could be possible.
- **Shrinks in extreme cold** - Vinyl tends to shrink when it gets cold. If the home it is being installed in does not maintain minimum temperatures (usually 65 degrees) throughout the year, problems with shrinking of the planks could occur.

Scratching – Many people are misled about luxury vinyl floors because they are durable floors. Many people think that a durable floor means they are scratchproof too. There is no such thing as a scratch-proof floor. Any floor can be scratched. If a salesperson tells you otherwise, they are either untrained, misleading you, or just telling you what they think they have to tell you to get the sale. The #1 complaint we have encountered with luxury vinyl floors is how easily they can scratch.



Sheet Vinyl

There are a variety of characteristics that continue to make sheet vinyl a popular choice today. It again is a water-resistant option that can easily be installed in kitchen and bathroom areas.

Here are some of the **advantages of sheet vinyl**:

- **Ease of maintenance** – Again, a very easy floor to maintain with sweeping and damp mopping with an approved vinyl floor cleaner to remove stains.
- **Inexpensive** – Sheet vinyl is in the lower range of costs for flooring.
- **Durability** – Vinyl is generally considered a highly durable material. Installation and quality of product will help determine the lifespan of the floor.
- **Ease of installation** – Many sheet vinyl floors can be installed by either full spread glue, perimeter glue, pressure sensitive installation, or floating installation. Full-spread glue will give you the best installation but may require additional costs associated with a new underlayment to glue to. Perimeter and floating installation will help with cutting down costs, but you may sacrifice durability when it comes to sliding or dragging items across the floor.

Here are some of the **disadvantages of sheet vinyl**:

- **Subfloor irregularities** – When installing sheet vinyl, it is important that the floor is a smooth, flat surface. If there are any irregularities, they will be more pronounced once vinyl is laid over the top of it.
- **New underlayment** – With most sheet vinyl, full-spread adhesive installation will give you the best results. Many times, the subfloor that is down in a home is not a warrantable subfloor and a new ¼" underlayment may need to get installed. This will increase the height of the floor and will increase the overall cost of the job.
- **Difficulty to repair** – A high-quality sheet vinyl will be very durable, while a low-cost sheet vinyl will be more susceptible to rips and tears. If sheet vinyl does rip or tear, patching a piece can be a problem and become visible over time. Pressure-sensitive installations are the best for repairing rips and

tears. Always keep any leftover sheet vinyl scrapes for possible repairs in the future.

- **No added value to your home** – Sheet vinyl will not increase the value of your home.
- **May not be able to fix without replacing the entire floor** – Because sheet vinyl comes in sheets, if there is a problem area that is too big to repair, replacement would be the only option to fix. Because other flooring options come in individual planks or tiles, as long as there is enough material left over, replacement of individual damaged pieces is relatively easy.



Ceramic Tile, Porcelain Tile, and Natural Stone

We are going to lump these three products together for the purpose of this guide. All three are very similar with some subtle differences between them. These three products can literally be used in any area of your home, although they are generally used in kitchens, bathrooms, mud rooms, and foyers. There are many benefits to tile, but there are some very big pitfalls that will need to be considered.

Here are some of the **advantages of tile**:

- **Durability** – Tile is an extremely durable floor and if installed properly, can last for decades.
- **Water-resistant** – This is one area where the three different tiles will vary. Porcelain tile is naturally water-resistant as its absorption rate is less than 0.5% (that is what makes it a porcelain tile). Most ceramic tiles are glazed and have a protective top layer that makes them very water resistant. Stone and unglazed tile will need to be sealed to help with their water resistance.
- **Easy maintenance** – Tile is fairly easy to clean with sweeping or vacuuming to keep the floor free of dirt and debris. Mopping periodically will keep your tile looking great for a long time. If stains do occur, you can use heavy-duty cleaners without worry of damaging the tile.
- **Design options** – There are literally thousands of options and combinations that can be used for any tile project. That can almost guarantee that you can have a different floor or wall than anyone else in the country. There are different styles, colors, shapes, and sizes that can be put together to create a work of art in your home.
- **Cost** – Ceramic tile can be a very reasonably priced floor. The installation cost is really the expensive part of the tile job.
- **Heated floors** – If you have radiant heat floors, tile is your best option for allowing your radiant heat to function at its highest level. Also, if you do not have radiant heat, you can purchase in-floor heating systems that will heat your tile so you can walk on a warm floor.
- **Increases the value of your home** – Tile is one of the floors that will increase the value of your home.

Here are some of the **disadvantages of tile**:

- **Coldness** – This is one of the biggest complaints about tile, it is very cold in cold weather. For people that have never experienced the coldness of tile in the winter months, it can be a shock to your feet and toes. The only cure is either radiant heat floors or in-floor heat. In-floor heat is very expensive but many tile owners think it is money well spent.
- **Hardness** – This is kind of a double-edged sword. Hardness equates to great durability but can make it difficult to stand on for extended periods of time. Area rugs may need to be used to help in areas where people may be standing for extended periods of time.
- **Installation costs** – As mentioned earlier, installation costs are expensive and will be the majority of the total cost of the tile job. The more elaborate and custom the job is, the more money will be spent on the installation. Installation is an extremely important part of the job and if it is not done correctly, tile failure may occur. Tile is one of the most technical floors to install.
- **Weight of the tile** – Tile is a very heavy product and there may be some subfloors that will not be stiff enough, or strong enough, to prevent cracking. This means that all subfloors may not be suitable for tile installations.
- **Cleaning grout** – Cleaning and sealing grout can be a major pain. There are some specialty grouts that can be used that do not need to be sealed, ever. They are much more expensive than regular grout, but many times are well worth the additional money.



Laminate

Laminate flooring has really come a long way over the last 20 years. When it first came out, laminate was the wonder floor, highly durable with the look of hardwood. The problem was it looked like an imitation hardwood, and no one thought it was hardwood, it looked like laminate. The second problem was water drastically affected the core of the product and swelling at the seams was a common occurrence. Now, there are laminates that look exactly like their wood or tile counterpart, there is no visual difference. In addition, as they continue to improve the water-resistance of laminate, they become a more viable option than luxury vinyl in many ways. As with any type of flooring, there are advantages and disadvantages that must be considered with your lifestyle and the goal you are trying to accomplish.

Here are some of the **advantages of laminate**:

- **The look** – When you get into the more expensive laminates, there is a hard time telling the difference between laminate and the wood or tile they are trying to imitate. Yes, there is still laminate that looks cheap and fake, they are the ones that can be purchased very inexpensively.
- **Durability** – Laminate is a very durable product, but it is not bulletproof. It is a wonderful floor for young, active households, or homes with larger dogs that still want the look of hardwood but more durability. Next to tile, laminate is probably the next most scratch-resistant and durable floor out there. As mentioned before, there is no such thing as a scratch-proof floor.
- **Easy to install** – Laminate is fairly easy to install. Laminate is laid as a floating floor with a locking mechanism to lock the pieces together. Either a thin cushion must be purchased to lay the laminate over or many products do come with an attached cushion.
- **Water-resistant** – Some of the middle to upper-end laminate is now coming with a complete waterproof warranty. Many others are coming with a 72-hour water warranty. Big strides are being made to make laminate as waterproof as luxury vinyl.
- **Ease of maintenance** – Laminate is a very easy floor to maintain. Sweeping and mopping with a laminate cleaner and microfiber is all that is required.

- **Ease of repairs** – If a board gets scratched or gouged, it is a fairly easy process to replace an individual plank, no matter where it is at in your floor. Therefore, it is very important to keep a couple of boxes after the installation, just in case there are any issues in the future that require planks to be replaced. Many times, patterns and locking systems are changed or dropped all together. The only way you can assure that you can get your hands on the same additional material is to keep additional material once the job is complete.

Here are some of the **disadvantages of laminate**:

- **No refinishing** – Laminate is just a picture of wood with a very durable wear layer over the top of it. There is nothing that can be refinished. Once a plank is scratched or gouged, it will more than likely need to be replaced.
- **Can still look fake** – If you do purchase an inexpensive laminate, it can still look fake and not real at all. Rental units could be a good option for inexpensive laminate in non-wet areas.
- **Floor Prep** – Since it will be laid as a floating floor, the subfloor must be level to within 3/16" within a 10-foot radius. This may require extensive subfloor preparation to get within specifications.
- **No value to your home** – Laminate does not increase the value of your home. It could however increase the salability of your home.
- **Baseboards in remodels** – If you are remodeling and want to install laminate flooring, baseboards must be discussed and how they will be handled. Laying laminate requires an expansion joint of (3/8" – 1/2") along all walls, doors, islands, cabinets, and anything else it would come in contact with. Either the baseboards will need to be removed then reinstalled or replaced, or a quarter round could be used to mask the expansion joint next to the baseboards. Either way, a different look or

additional expense will more than likely be required to properly install this product.



Hardwood

Hardwood floors are beautiful and a highly sought-after amenity that home buyers are looking for. Hardwood can be beautiful and a luxury in the right home, with the right lifestyle. It can also be a disaster if you do not have the right home or the right lifestyle. As with all floors, there are advantages and disadvantages, and we want to make sure you understand them both before investing in a hardwood floor. In addition, hardwood also comes in solid hardwood and engineered hardwood. We will give you the facts on both of them too.

Here are some of the **advantages of hardwood floors**:

- **Increases the value of your home** – As mentioned earlier, hardwood is a highly sought-after amenity that home buyers are looking for. It will not only increase the value of your home, but it will also definitely increase your home's salability.
- **Longevity** – If properly cared for, hardwood floors can last for decades.
- **Most can be refinished** – If solid hardwood flooring gets too scratched up with too many gouges, most of the time the hardwood can be sanded down and re-finished. You then basically have a brand-new floor again.
- **There are many styles, textures, and colors to choose from** – There are many species of wood, with different looks for each of them. In addition, staining can add color to match almost any design scheme.
- **Stays warmer than tile** – Hardwood stays warmer in the cold months than ceramic tile does. No need for in-floor heating systems.
- **Ease of maintenance** – Sweeping and mopping with a hardwood cleaner and microfiber mop are all that is required for most hardwood floors.

Here are some of the **disadvantages of hardwood floors**:

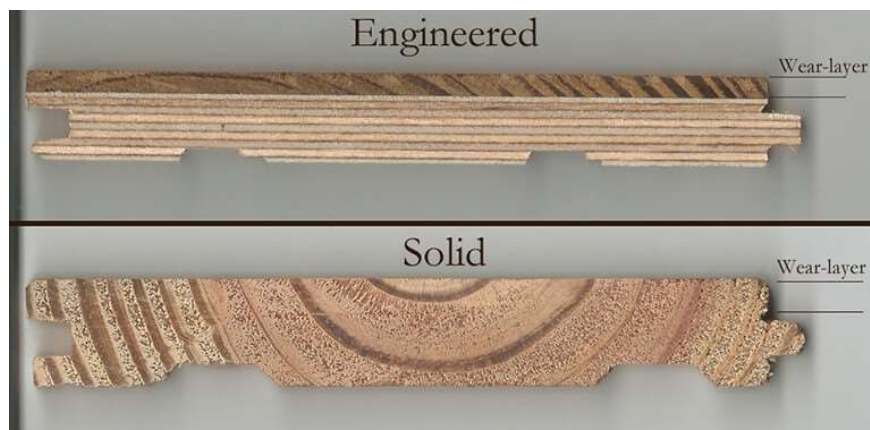
- **Humidity needs** – Hardwood is a very temperamental floor. Humidity must be kept in the 30% - 55% range (may vary slightly by manufacturer). Humidity in Montana is traditionally much lower than these requirements. Therefore, an in-home humidifier is going to be required to get the humidity to the proper levels. Having a portable humidifier that is left on a counter will not do the job. Leaving a pot of water on the woodstove will not do the job. Having a wood stove and/or air conditioning will increase

the dryness in the home. If humidity levels are not able to be maintained in the home, numerous issues could happen to your hardwood floor. With lower humidity levels, as we see in Montana, the issues will include splintering, splitting, and checking, chipping easier, and gapping between boards. In other areas of the country where high humidity is the issue, they can have the floor swell and raise up in areas due to pressure, boards can also warp or cup. A hygrometer should be purchased and humidity levels monitored at all times.

- **Temperature needs** – Hardwood flooring also does not like big swings in temperature. Hardwood likes temperature and humidity to remain as constant as possible. In the ideal setting for your hardwood, the temperature would remain between 60 – 80 degrees and humidity between 30% - 55%. If there is variation in either of these within the recommended ranges, it should be a slow change over time.
- **Can scratch and gouge** – Hardwood floors can and will scratch, dent and gouge. Some species of hardwood are harder than other species, therefore some are harder to scratch, dent and gouge than others. If you purchase a hardwood floor, go into it with the understanding that your floor is going to get scratched, it will dent and there will be some gouges eventually. We like to call this adding character to your wood floor. Hopefully, it will happen less than anticipated and you will be pleasantly surprised. If you have indoor dogs (especially medium to large dogs), there is an increased possibility that your hardwood flooring will become scratched. A dog's toenail is very hard and can create havoc on a hardwood floor, at times scratching the floor with every step they take. Just be very careful with the decision to put hardwood floors in your home if an indoor dog is a member of your family.
- **Cost** – Hardwood can be expensive. Hardwood that is pre-finished will usually be more expensive than unfinished hardwood. Installation will cost more for unfinished hardwood than it will for installing pre-finished hardwood as they do not need to sand and finish the pre-finished hardwood onsite.
- **Loud** – If you are accustomed to the sound-absorbing qualities of carpet, hardwood floors can be a shock with how much louder your home will be with hardwood.

- **Maintenance** – Because hardwood is affected by moisture, many times people will ruin their hardwood floors by trying to clean them with too much water or a steamer. Even though TV commercials rave about the wonderous steamer for your hardwood floor, it will ruin your hardwood very quickly. Do not use a steamer on your hardwood floors under any circumstance.

Differences between solid and engineered hardwood – Hardwood can come in either solid hardwood construction or engineered construction. Solid hardwood is a solid piece of hardwood that is nothing but hardwood. An engineered hardwood is a layered product with a thin layer of hardwood on top of a base of high-quality plywood. As with most flooring, there are advantages and disadvantages to both types.



Here are some of the **advantages of solid hardwood flooring**:

- **Refinishing** – Most solid hardwood floors can be sanded down and refinished numerous times. Once completed, you basically have a brand-new floor again.
- **Installation** - Solid hardwood floors are installed by either nailing, stapling, or glued-down methods. This gives a more solid installation and will not have a hollow sound that can happen while walking over some floating floor installations.
- **Beveled edges on unfinished hardwood** – Solid hardwood can be purchased unfinished and then finished on site. This will eliminate the

beveled edges that are on most engineered floors or pre-finished hardwood floors (more on beveled edges under disadvantages).

Here are some of the **disadvantages of solid hardwood flooring**:

- **Unstable** – Solid hardwood is unstable and is much more susceptible to expansion and contraction during the seasons. The wider the board width, the more expansion, and contraction will occur and be visible. Gapping between boards is a common occurrence during the winter months in Montana.
- **Height** – Usual height for solid hardwood is $\frac{3}{4}$ ". If remodeling, baseboards, doorjambs, and transitions to other flooring types in the home may present some problems.
- **Installation** – Not all subfloors are of the proper quality to accept a solid hardwood installation. If that is the case, an underlayment may be required to get the subfloor within the manufacturer's requirements.
- **Beveled edges on pre-finished hardwood** – On almost all pre-finished hardwood, there will be some sort of beveling on the edges of the boards. This is to help hide imperfections between the finished height of the boards. Some people like the look of beveled edges, but most prefer it to be as minimal as possible.
- **Cost** – Most of the time, a solid hardwood floor will be more expensive than an engineered hardwood floor. The expensive part of hardwood flooring is the hardwood. Using a $\frac{3}{4}$ " solid hardwood, it would make sense that it would be more expensive than an engineered hardwood that uses a thin veneer of the hardwood over the top of less expensive high-quality plywood. Be careful with very inexpensive solid hardwood. Many times, the cull rate (the percentage of boards that are uninstallable) can be significantly higher, causing the cost of the job to dramatically increase by increasing the amount of hardwood required to properly install the floor. In addition, there can be an abundance of short boards causing the job to look disjointed and cheap.

Here are some of the **advantages of engineered hardwood flooring**:

- **More stable** – Engineered hardwood flooring is designed to be much more stable than solid hardwood floors. Expansion and contraction are dramatically less than solid hardwood floors.
- **Cost** – Usually, engineered hardwood flooring is less expensive than solid hardwood flooring. That is not always the case, but more times than not that is the general rule.
- **Height** – Engineered hardwood can come in much thinner than solid hardwood floors, as thin as 3/8". This will help when transitioning to other floors in the home.
- **Installation** – Many engineered floors can be installed as a floating floor. This increases the types of subfloors that a hardwood floor can be installed over since we are not attaching the hardwood to the subfloor.

Here are some of the **disadvantages of engineered hardwood flooring**:

- **Refinishing** – The number of times an engineered hardwood flooring can be sanded down and refinished is much more limited. A lot will depend on the quality of the engineered hardwood that is being purchased but will range from screening only to refinishing no more than once or sometimes twice.
- **Cheap products** – If someone is just shopping price for engineered flooring, cheaper products can cut costs by using inferior glues, inferior finishes, inferior plywood, and problems can occur.
- **Floor Prep** – If installing using the floating floor method, the subfloor must be level to within 3/16" within a 10-foot radius. Extensive floor prep may be required to get the subfloor to within these specifications.



Carpet

There are many positives that carpet provides. There are a lot of different styles and fibers used in carpeting, each having its advantages and disadvantages.

Here are some of the **advantages of carpeting**:

- **Comfort** – Carpet is soft, cozy, and comfortable to walk on, much more so than hard-surfaced products.
- **Warmth** – Carpet is much warmer than hard surface products during the cold months.
- **Noise reduction** – Carpeted rooms are much quieter than rooms without carpet. Carpet absorbs sounds so the noise level in your home will drop when carpet is used.
- **Style and color** – There are literally thousands of carpet choices to choose from, something for every home's design and color.
- **Safety** – Carpet is a very slip-resistant flooring option, so carpet is a great choice for homes with small children, pets, and stairways.
- **Cost** – Carpet is a very reasonably priced flooring option.

Here are some of the **disadvantages of carpeting**:

- **Longevity** – Carpet will for the most part, wear out before hard surface products wear out. Matting and crushing can occur in high traffic areas, and depending on the quality of carpet purchased, can happen within a year.
- **Staining** – Carpet can stain if something is spilled on it. There are stain treatments and different fibers that will help combat staining, but no carpet is completely stain-proof, they are stain resistant.
- **Seams** – There are many factors that can help to hide seams in carpet. Some carpets are not going to seam up very well no matter by who or how they are installed. If a salesperson tells you that seams in "X" carpet are going to be invisible, they are setting you up to be disappointed. It is generally accepted that some carpet will seam up with less visible seams than other carpets. A general rule is – short pile or looped carpets tend to show seams more than a thicker or cut pile carpet.
- **Professional cleaning required** – For manufacturing warranties to stay in affect, carpet must be professionally cleaned by hot water extraction

every 18 – 24 months (depending on the manufacturer). All receipts must be kept as the consumer must be able to prove that they fulfilled this requirement in the event a claim is filed years down the road.

- **Not all vacuums are created equal** – Did you know your vacuum can actually void a carpet warranty? Manufacturers have determined there are some vacuums that are too strong and will actually damage your carpet, voiding your carpet warranty. What is the best vacuum to use on your carpet? Check out the following Carpet and Rug Institutes certified vacuum list - [CRI Certified Vacuums](#). You can also check with the manufacturer of your carpet for their approved vacuum list too.

We do want to elaborate a little more on carpet as there are many styles and fibers that are used, with significant differences between them. Here is a brief rundown.



Carpet Style

There are a lot of different carpet styles, but we are going to try and cut it down to 3 different styles for simplicity.

- **Cut pile or “plush”** – This is a very functional style and is the most forgiving. Seams, for the most part, will be less visible in this type of carpet.
- It will lack in the design aspect of things but can be the softest and most luxurious carpet style.
- **Loop pile or “berber”** – This type of carpet can wear very well, but it is susceptible to snagging. If a snag occurs, each of the loops are connected to the loop next to it and it can continue to unravel until it gets to the end of the carpet (unless it is caught and fixed before the snag continues running). Things that can snag a loop are – larger dogs and cats that scratch at the flooring, beater bars on vacuums, or dragging things over the carpet (furniture, toys, etc.). We have seen this style of carpet destroyed within one day of an installation by a toddler with a drill.
- **Patterned or “loop cut loop”** – Patterned carpet is very design oriented and comes in many beautiful patterns. This is one of the fastest-growing styles of carpet. The biggest downfall is the additional carpet that is needed when there are seams required. The carpet pattern should be matched at all seams, and to do that, additional carpet must be ordered. If a pattern has a 3' x 3' pattern match, every time there is a seam, at least 36 sq ft of additional carpet is being ordered and installed. Pattern carpet total costs, when compared to non-patterned carpet total costs, can be significantly higher. To help cut down on the additional cost, look for pattern pieces with smaller patterns.



Carpet Fibers

There are predominately 5 fiber types being used in the majority of carpets today. They are Wool, Nylon, Polyester, Triexta (Smart Strand), and Olefin (Polypropylene). What is the best fiber? That depends on your definition of best. Are you looking for the best wearing, best stain resistant, best fade resistant, best value, best whatever? We will give a little explanation of each of the fibers. When we compare fibers, we are comparing them as if each fiber was in the same type of constructed carpet. Carpet construction plays a tremendous role in the performance of the carpet, no matter what fiber is used.

- **Wool Carpet** – Wool is the only natural fiber that we will be discussing, all other fibers are synthetic. Wool is traditionally the most expensive of the fibers. It is also the most durable, resisting matting and crushing the best. Wool carpet works best for people that are interested in the finer things in life.
- **Nylon** – If you are looking for overall performance, nylon is a great choice. On the cost scale, nylon will come in the #2 spot behind wool. It is a very durable fiber that cleans easily as long as it is stain resistance treated. Nylon works well in all styles of carpet.
- **Polyester** – Polyester represents a great value in fiber. It costs a lot less than wool or nylon, but it does not have the durability of them either. It works great for lower-traffic areas in your home. If you want long-term performance in high-traffic areas, polyester carpets may not be the right choice for you.
- **Triexta (Smart Strand)** – This is the newest fiber on the market. It is an off breed of polyester but is not considered a polyester fiber. It is very close to the same cost as nylon. The fiber is made by only one manufacturer, so it is not as widely used as nylon. Triexta can be used in all styles of carpet and performs very well.
- **Olefin (Polypropylene)** – This is the least expensive fiber of the bunch. It is also the least durable, which is why it is almost always made into a loop-style carpet (berbers or commercial). Constructed as a berber carpet, durability can be very good. Although, larger loop berbers in an olefin fiber will tend to mat down and show wear.

COMPARING CARPET FIBERS

Carpet Type	Resiliency Determined by fiber structure and modifications	Soil/Stain Determined by color, texture, dyes, and fiber structure
Wool	Best	Best
Nylon	Best	Good
Olefin	Good	Good
Triexta (SmartStrand)	Best	Best
Polyester	Better	Better

Carpet Cushion

Carpet Cushion is an extremely important part of your carpet purchase. Not only will it give your carpet the “comfort factor”, but it will also largely affect the performance of your carpet by absorbing the impact of foot traffic. Determining what your carpet “wants” are, will help in determining what cushion will be best for your project. In general terms, the denser the cushion is, the firmer the feeling will be underfoot and the better the performance and resistance to wear. For thicker and less dense cushions, the feeling underfoot will be soft and squishy and the quicker the carpet is going to show wear. Lots of times, finding a happy combination is the best answer. Working with a trusted flooring advisor will be important to find the best cushion for your project.

Other than cushion types, there are two main factors in carpet cushion, thickness, and density.

- **Thickness** – Carpet cushions will usually come in a thickness between $\frac{1}{4}$ " and $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Any cushion over $\frac{1}{2}$ " in thickness will usually cause installation problems. A great height for most carpets will be $\frac{7}{16}$ ". However, many short pile, berber carpets, or pattern carpets will often call for a thinner cushion to be used and a $\frac{3}{8}$ " cushion would be better. The reasoning is, thicker cushions have too much “give” and can damage these types of carpet.
- **Density** – This is usually measured in pounds (per cubic foot) and will generally be in the 3 – 10 lbs. range for most common cushions. The higher the density, the better wearability you will get from your carpet. The lower the density, the softer underfoot it will feel to walk on. In general terms, a 6lb cushion would be the minimum recommended level to use in your home. If your home is busy, or in higher traffic areas of your home, an 8 lb. cushion would be your best option.

The type of cushion is the #1 factor that should be discussed when deciding on the best cushion for your project. There are a few different types of cushions we will be discussing.

- **Rebond** – This is the most popular, and many times the best, choice for a project. It is a very durable cushion, works very well in a home, and is a reasonably priced option.
- **Prime Urethane** – Not to be confused with a regular foam cushion of the past. This is made of very dense urethane and is a much better grade of cushion. This type of cushion is used a lot in commercial applications but is becoming more popular in residential homes.
- **Wool or synthetic fiber cushion** – These cushions are made from natural wool or shredded fabrics. They work very well with berber carpets and other carpets that require dense, low-profile cushions. These cushions do well in basements as they breathe well and will resist mold and mildew.
- **Rubber** – These cushions will usually be more expensive than the other types of cushion. They are the best cushions to use over radiant heat. They will usually come in either a waffle or slab style. The slab style is often used in commercial applications and is considered the premium carpet cushion.
- **Moisture Barrier** - Carpet cushions can also come with or without a moisture barrier. A moisture barrier on top of the cushion, will not allow spills to soak into the cushion or worse yet, soak into your subfloor. The moisture barrier is designed for spills and pet accidents, it will not help with most flooding situations. Pierce Flooring does recommend a cushion with a moisture barrier, in most situations.



Every purchase
of Charity and
Courage cushion
benefits St. Jude



Product Selection Conclusion

We hope you found this to be helpful. It is a lot of information, but important information. You can find additional product information on our [website](#).

Talking with a true flooring professional, a trusted advisor, they will be asking lots of questions to help determine what the best flooring options for you and your home, lifestyle, and expectations are. A trusted advisor will want to help you make a wise choice, one that will give you the best results for what you are wanting to accomplish within your home.



How to choose the right flooring store

Now that you have an idea of what flooring material may be best for your home and lifestyle, shouldn't choosing a store to purchase it from be the easy part? You might be thinking, "Finding the store that has the cheapest price, maybe even buying over the Internet, will be easy." Sounds really easy, but choosing the right store can be just as important as finding the right product. Choose the wrong store and your dream purchase can turn into a nightmare scenario.

Unfortunately, not all flooring stores are created equal. There are many "games" that unethical flooring retailers play. These "games" are designed to increase their profits and mislead the consumer.

Game #1 – Bait and Switch – Here is how this game is played. You find the perfect carpet for your home and lifestyle. The dealer orders a lower quality carpet, in the same style and color, in place of the higher quality piece you thought you purchased. For the average person, it can be very difficult to tell the difference between the two pieces. The dealer pays less money for the lower-quality piece and then hope they don't get caught. You might not find out this happened until later, once your flooring starts wearing out much earlier than expected. How do you combat this? By using an honest, reputable local retailer, one with a proven track record.



Game #2 – Telling you what you want to hear – What is the difference between a flooring salesperson and a trusted flooring advisor? A salesperson will say whatever they have to say to "get the sale." A trusted advisor will tell you the truth, even if it costs them the sale. A trusted advisor will be looking out for your best interest as they are wanting to create a customer for life, not just a quick sale

to make a buck. Here are just a few of the things you might hear from an unethical salesperson – “This carpet is stainproof,” “the seams in this carpet will be invisible,” “this product won’t scratch, it’s almost bulletproof,” “all installers are the same,” “all warranties are the same,” or “our store never has issues with defective product or installation issues.”

A trusted flooring advisor will let you know:

- **There is no such thing as a stainproof carpet.** Carpet is stain resistant, with some carpets being more stain resistant than others. No carpet is stain-proof.
- **Some carpets will seam up much better than other carpets.** A general rule of thumb, a short pile or looped carpet tends to show seams more than higher pile or cut pile carpets. Anticipate seeing some evidence of a seam. If you don’t see evidence of a seam, be pleasantly surprised.
- **Any floor you put down can scratch, there is no such thing as bulletproof flooring.** Different products are more scratch resistant than others, but nothing is scratchproof.
- **A good installer is critical to the success of your entire project.** Using a bad installer can completely ruin your job, costing additional time and money.
- **All warranties are not the same.** Ultimately, a warranty is only as good as the company that stands behind it. A company can promise you the world, but if they go out of business, how good was your warranty? That is why it is extremely important to deal with a reputable company, preferably one that has a proven track record for many years or even decades. Always check for referrals and look at online reviews.
- **One constant in the flooring business is there will be a small number of problems.** Manufacturers have lots of quality control measures in place, but still, the industry average is close to 2% of all material shipped is defective. Unfortunately, most of the time the defect can’t be seen until the product is being installed. There are also times that an installer can have an “off day” and an installation error can occur (they are human after all). Be sure to ask a dealer what their process is to handle issues if they occur. They should be able to tell you the process in detail. If they can’t, they are probably using game #3 as their process.

Game #3 – When there is a problem, delay is the name of the game –

Unethical dealers will attempt to ignore issues or delay the process. They do this because they know if they ignore or delay the process long enough, many customers will just go away and not pursue the issue. If that number is even 7 out of 10 customers with an issue, they just saved 70% of the dollars needed to take care of their customers. This is just another way that an unethical retailer will do business. A reputable business, one that has been in business for a long time and is trying to treat every customer in a manner that they will do business with them for the rest of their lives, would never play this type of game.

Game #4 – Using cut-rate, untrained and unqualified installers –



Unethical dealers try to save money by hiring low-cost, cut-rate installers. By hiring cut-rate, untrained, and unqualified installers, the dealer is able to look cheaper than the competition. Unfortunately, you rarely know if an installer is untrained and unqualified until the job is almost completed. That is when the real nightmare can begin.

Why installation is so important

Buying floor covering is different than buying other items for your home. Flooring is installed and therefore it is quite literally being manufactured in your home. Flooring installation is a very complex process that takes a quality, trained professional to install it properly. When flooring is purchased, the consumer is actually purchasing two different items, the materials, and the installation. Here are some of the issues that can arise from the installation.

A retailer not guaranteeing the installation – Be sure that the company you are working with will guarantee the work of their installers. If they guarantee their work, it will usually vary somewhere between one year to the lifetime of the flooring. Usually, if there is an installation error, it will show up within the first year of the flooring being installed.

Hiring an installer directly – For some consumers, saving money is their primary concern. Many will look at hiring a discount installer directly to save a little money. Unfortunately, many of these installers have earned the “discount installer” name for a reason, they discount their work too. There are some other major problems that can arise from this practice. If there is an issue, it can end with the installer saying it is a manufacturing issue and the manufacturer saying it is an installation-related issue. You are then the one that is stuck in the middle and your floor is not getting fixed. If the installation is being performed by the retailer, it does not matter if the issue was manufacturing-related or installation related, both would be covered with the retailer standing behind both parts of the purchase.

Ongoing training for installers – The flooring business is always changing. For installers to keep up with the industry, installation training is vital. Check with the retailer to see what they do for their installers to get trained on the current installation trends and procedures.

The best installers will usually be working at the most reputable retailers – Good installers will usually work at stores that can keep them busy and pay them a decent wage. Usually, the most reputable companies are the ones that can keep

the best installers busy. The best installers will also demand more money than lower-quality installers. This is one of the reasons you will rarely get the best installers working at the “Big Box” stores. One way the “Big Box” stores can be a discount retailer, is by using “cut-rate” installers. They have to use cut-rate installers because they do not pay a decent wage to their installers.

You can do everything right and a bad installer can mess it all up – Nothing is more frustrating than doing all the research to purchase the perfect flooring for your home and lifestyle, and then having it all ruined by a bad installation. On top of that, dealing with a retailer that will not stand behind the job they sold you adds to the frustration. That is why it is imperative that you work with a reputable company. A company that has been in business for a long time, that invests in their installers with training, and one that is looking to keep you as a customer for the rest of your life. We can’t emphasize it enough, always ask for referrals and check for the retailer’s reviews from previous customers.

Misconceptions that can cost you

Purchasing a new floor is an expensive endeavor that can cost a lot more if not purchased correctly. Here are a few misconceptions that can end up costing you a lot more money in the end.

Misconception #1 – The best way to purchase flooring is from an online dealer.

There are a lot of issues with purchasing flooring over the Internet. It can really be one of the worse places to purchase flooring. Here's why:

- 1) Warranty claims can turn your dream project into a nightmare. Trying to get an online dealer to honor a warranty can be very frustrating, time-consuming, and at times, costly. I once heard some good advice – “Never buy anything that costs more than \$500 when you can't get your hands around the neck of the salesperson if there are problems.”
- 2) Speaking of salespeople, you never know if the salesperson on the other end is a “salesperson,” an “18-year-old techie,” or a “trusted flooring advisor.” Do you really think they will be looking out for your best interest, especially if they never have to see you face to face?
- 3) They are not looking to create a customer for life. Most online dealers are looking to make a quick buck and it's anyone's guess if they are going to be in business tomorrow or not.
- 4) Many times, a very cheap square foot price will be shown and then freight is added to the price. When comparing pricing to a local dealer's price, always look at the delivered price including freight. Most of the time the local dealer's square foot price, which will already have freight included, will actually be less than the overall online price.
- 5) Online dealers do not have relationships with installers. They might have some names but have never seen an installation performed by them. The chances of getting a cut-rate, unqualified installer is greatly increased.
- 6) Getting your product delivered can really create some logistical issues.

Misconception #2 – The lowest price represents the best value.

The price is what you pay, and the value is what you get. Lots of times, consumers are looking for the best price without looking for the best value. Here are some of the things you should be looking for that help create value:

- 1) Dealing with a knowledgeable trusted advisor instead of a salesperson. Are you dealing with someone that is looking out for your best interest rather than a salesperson looking to make a quick sale?
- 2) Dealing with a reputable company, one that you don't have to worry about if they are playing "games" with you or not.
- 3) Expert installation - you do not need to worry if the dealer is going to use cut-rate, unqualified installers.
- 4) In the unlikely event of an issue, there is a process in place to handle it. There is no delay game played. The company is looking to create customers for life and will take care of the problem.
- 5) You get what you ordered, there is no "bait and switch".
- 6) Communication with you before and after the installation is completed.

Many people think that dealing with discount "big box" stores will represent the best value for their purchase. Remember, it is best to look for the value, not just the lowest price (even though the "Big Box" stores do not always have the lowest price). Here are some links to the rip-off horror stories of consumers finding out the hard way that the "Big Box" stores do not have their best interest in mind:

[Home Depot](#)

[Lowe's](#)

[Lumber Liquidators](#)

Misconception #3 – All warranties are the same.

As mentioned earlier, a warranty is only as good as the company that is standing behind it. Here at Pierce Flooring, we have the Pierce Promise. It is a simple commitment but unmatched by anyone in the industry; we do what we promise. If there is an issue, we are going to take care of it. The only way we could have stayed in business for over 99 years is by taking care of our customers.



THE PIERCE PROMISE
ONE PROMISE. ONE WARRANTY.
NO CONFUSING TERMS. NO FINE PRINT, AND
NO HASSLE. IT'S THAT SIMPLE.

Misconception #4 – It is going to cost money to get someone to come to my home to measure and give me a quote.

Most local flooring dealers will give you a free in-home measurement and quote. Most of the "Big Box" stores will charge you a fee to perform an in-home measurement and give you a quote. They will then credit the fee back to you if

you end up purchasing the flooring from them. To get an accurate quote, an in-home measurement and job site evaluation really needs to be performed. Here at Pierce Flooring, if we come out to your home for a free in-home measurement and job site evaluation, the quote you receive from us is a “no surprises” quote. If we mess up the quote, we pay for it, not you. Of course, this does not apply to unforeseen extra work required. These are issues that cannot be seen without tearing out your existing flooring. Obviously, we are not going to tear out existing flooring at the time of the on-site evaluation and measurement. Most of the time, these issues are subfloor related.

Misconception #5 – Local dealers don’t have the buying power of the “Big Box” stores.

This is a misconception in a lot of ways, let me explain. Manufacturers want to move product and a lot of it. Manufacturers will give some very large price advantages if a product is going to be stocked in a store. For the most part, stores will sell more of a stocked product than a non-stocked (special order) product. So yes, the “Big Box” stores do have immense buying power and will use it for their stocking products. Their pricing on non-stocking products is very comparable to the local dealers pricing for the same non-stocking products. If a local dealer is stocking a product, they would be buying their stocking product for less than the “Big Box” stores would be able to purchase it, as a non-stocking product. That is why you will rarely see a local dealer stocking the same products as a “Big Box” store.

Pierce Flooring is also a member of the National Flooring Alliance (NFA). This is a group of America’s Finest Dealers, currently with 42 dealers throughout the country. Check out their website for more information on this very prestigious group – [NFA](#). To become a member of the NFA, new members are required to be a leader in their markets with sales of \$10,000,000 or more. They also must be recognized by both manufacturers and other dealers as a company with a track record of high integrity. I bet you did not know that Pierce Flooring was the 37th biggest specialty flooring retailer in the country for 2022!

The NFA negotiates huge buys on “stocking” products that represent some of the best values anywhere in the country. These are purchases from the top flooring

manufacturers in the country. In addition, we travel the country ourselves, numerous times throughout the year, in pursuit of the best buys out there. This allows us to offer incredible deals to our customers, ones they can't find anywhere else.



A Quick Summary

Buying flooring is a major investment! Not only in the amount of money that will be spent, but a major investment in you! Having a beautiful home makes people feel good! How your flooring looks in your home will have a major impact on its beauty! Trusting a “discount dealer,” “Big Box Store,” or even some stranger on the internet with such an important decision can end up being a nightmare. Benjamin Franklin once said, “The bitterness of poor quality and lack of service is remembered long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten.”

If you are looking for the job to be done right, doing these two steps will be extremely important. First, find an honest, reputable company to purchase your flooring from. One with a proven track record that you can verify by referrals or reviews from previous customers. Second, find an experienced, trusted flooring advisor to help in the process of finding the perfect flooring for your home. In addition, your trusted advisor can set up an experienced and well-trained installer to beautifully install your new flooring. At Pierce Flooring, we love to help simplify the floor buying process for our customers. That way, all they need to do is enjoy their beautiful new flooring and feel good about their purchase.

Why Pierce?

It has been brought up many times with how important it is to find an honest, reputable retailer, one with a proven track record, to work with to beautify your home. It would be a disservice to you if we did not tell you why Pierce Flooring is different from all other flooring retailers in Montana. Here are the top reasons people choose to partner with Pierce Flooring.

- **Selection and Convenience** – We offer the largest selections of flooring and in-stock inventory in Montana to choose from. We are also able to quickly transfer products between our locations to dramatically increase the available inventory for projects with a short completion requirement.
- **Convenience** – We have 7 locations throughout Montana to serve you.
- **History and Reputation** – We are a Montana family-owned business that has been serving customers for over 99 years. Because we understand the importance of taking care of our customers, Pierce is consistently ranked in the top 40 flooring companies in the nation.
- **Quality Installers** – Pierce only partners with installers who produce quality results ensuring satisfaction from start to finish.
- **Installer retention, recruitment, and training** – We have many installers that have worked with us for decades and generations. We recruit top-notch installers from around the country to ensure only the best of the best are in your home. We are the only retailer in Montana that has a designated installer trainer and an apprentice program to help grow installation professionals across the state.
- **Service** – Our dedicated Service Managers address all our customer's questions and needs.

- **Knowledge and Professionalism** – We are experts in our industry so we can better serve our customers. We are dedicated to meeting the needs of our customers with a pledge of “doing it right the first time.”
- **Customer Commitment** – We are committed to making our customers the focus. Our goal is to treat every customer in a manner that they will do business with us for the rest of their lives.
- **The Pierce Promise** – It is a simple commitment but unmatched by anyone in the industry; we do what we promise.
- **Custom Schedules** – Pierce Flooring has developed one of the most advanced and professional scheduling systems to ensure your project is completed on time.
- **Pierce cares about their community** – We give back to the community because the people we serve are more than just customers; they are family, friends, and our neighbors.
- **Value** – With our quality products, professional sales and support staff, knowledge of the industry, large in-stock inventory, and commitment to truly serving our customers, without a doubt our customers get more for their money with Pierce.

Thank You

We hope you found this Consumer Guide to Purchasing Flooring beneficial. Pierce Flooring, Montana's premier floor covering experts, has 7 locations throughout the state of Montana. If you have any questions or comments, or would like to schedule one of our free in-home measurements, please give one of our stores a call. We would be happy to assist you in any way possible. We have been in business for over 99 years by helping the great people of Montana beautify their lives, one home or business at a time!

Pierce Flooring & Cabinet Design – Billings (406) 652-4666

Pierce Flooring & Design – Bozeman (406) 587-5428

Pierce Flooring & Design – Missoula (406) 543-8224

The World Famous Carpet Barn – Billings (406) 656-2824

Pierce Carpet Mill Outlet – Bozeman (406) 586-8234

Pierce Carpet Mill Outlet – Butte (406) 494-3313

Pierce Flooring Wholesale Direct – Great Falls (406) 727-3832

P.S. We mentioned how important referrals and customer reviews are. Please see the following reviews from some of our customers throughout the state.



Reviews

Between all 7 of our stores, currently, our overall Google rating is 4.8 stars. That is with well over 1,900 reviews. Even the happiest place on earth, Disneyland, only has a 4.6-star Google rating! We do not pre-screen any of our reviews as some of the unethical dealers do. You are able to see all the good and the bad reviews (although there are very few bad reviews). Here are just a few reviews:

What some of the great people of Montana are saying about Pierce Flooring:



Where did you get your awesome carpet...this padding though...like walking on air! I reply, "Pierce Flooring of course, they are amazing." Highly recommend. Thank you for making my house look and feel the best! – [Brook Forsythe](#)



If there's one thing I love most about walking into Pierce Flooring, it's the incredibly friendly and welcoming staff. I haven't met one person there that isn't just lovely to work with. Would definitely recommend!! – [Jessica McCurdy](#)





Very courteous and knowledgeable staff. Great design team! My remodeled bathrooms are fabulous! – [Robin Evans](#)







When my husband and I bought our first home we went into Pierce Flooring and met Tracy. Tracy Roy has been our go to guy for almost 30 years! He knows the product, he is friendly, easy to work with and gets to know his customers. He has helped me choose flooring when even I didn't know what I wanted. – [Maria Bray](#)







The staff at Pierce Flooring are knowledgeable, helpful and courteous. Their products are well priced and high quality. Highly recommend. – [Cheryl Moore-Gough](#)



  Pierce made reflooring our home really easy. They sent us home with great samples that fit our lifestyle and when April came for measurements, she brought a couple more samples that she thought might work. Their installer was wonderful and our new carpeting and wood laminate looks amazing. Everyone who comes through the house is shocked by the difference and how good this looks. Thanks Pierce Flooring! – [Shawn Harris](#)

  No matter how big or small your project is you are treated with awesome customer service. They have an incredible selection whether you just need a small piece of vinyl for a bathroom, wall-to-wall carpet, or specialty flooring, they have it all! – [Meg Simone](#)

  The team was informative, friendly and efficient. This was my first time buying new carpets and I really enjoyed the whole experience because of the amazing staff! – [Emma Johnson](#)

  Service was great from start to finish. We have used Pierce Flooring in the past and have always been very pleased. We were also very pleased with their installers. Fast courteous and a great job – [Marvin Blodgett](#)

  Outstanding tandem of installers. They asked questions about quality control, troubleshoot all aspects of install and ensured we were 100% pleased with finished product. They also gave tutorial on maintenance and repair if needed. Super professional, I will use them again on all future projects. – [Ken Goerz](#)

  Excellent customer service to compliment their expansive quality inventory. It's refreshing to be treated respectfully for even the smallest projects. Pierce is now my one stop shop for flooring. – [Christine Tortorella](#)