

Many options available for flooring

In today's remodeling craze, homeowners have several flooring options. Which type of floorcovering is the best for you?

Carpet is an old favorite. But there are other options available you may want to consider. New technology has produced more colors and textures of greater durability than ever before. Innovative patterns and custom designs also are available.

Vinyl covering now offers more design choices than ever before. It is durable, practical and inexpensive. It's not your mother's brown linoleum anymore. Prices generally range from about \$6 to \$16 per square foot,

depending on the grade. If you hire a professional to install the flooring, labor can cost more than the materials. So, it's a good thing installing it yourself is also fairly easy, especially if you choose the new self-adhesive vinyl tile squares. Sheet vinyl is a bit more difficult to install yourself, so use an installation kit.

Ceramic tile is also making a comeback. Not just for the countertop anymore, floor tiles are versatile and easy to maintain, and give a room a very contemporary look. They are fairly safe, too, since new technology has allowed them the luxury of a glossy surface without being too slippery. Total cost for

all materials for a 12-by 12-foot room would be about \$250.

"Most anyone can do it themselves," says David Dean, an associate at The Home Depot. "Just remember that it can be laborious because the materials are very heavy and cutting the tiles can be tricky."

For about \$8 a day, Dean recommends renting a tile cutter for the job. "If you do it yourself," he adds, "start in the middle of the room and work your way out, so all your cuts are hidden under cabinets and too-kicks." Having a professional install the floor adds approximately \$6 to \$7 per square foot to your total cost.

Homeowners looking for a real investment are turning to hardwood floors. Options with different types of wood and creatively patterned placement of the boards have made hardwood flooring a decorator's dream. Contrary to popular belief, it is also something that confident homeowners can do themselves, thus saving some expense. Parquet and plank floors use glue adhesive, and more intricate nailed-down floors use a tongue-and-groove system "that makes it just like putting together a puzzle," says Dean. Costs vary for the do-it-yourselfer. To have a pro do it for you, expect to add anywhere from \$2 to \$6 per square foot to your expenses.

It's easy to have a new look with wallpaper

If your walls need cosmetic surgery, and paint just won't do the trick, try a wallpaper makeover.

Despite popular opinion that wallpapering is a challenging task, it can actually be easy.

"Wallpapering is not as difficult as you think. Once you establish your own style of hanging, it gets easier and easier," says Sherry Mitchell, a design center specialist at The Home Depot.

Clean painted surfaces with a bleach solution and then prime the wall

before hanging new paper.

If it is necessary to remove old paper before hanging new paper, remove the old paper by using a paint roller to apply a mixture of very hot water and liquid detergent. If the paper is vinyl, it must be slashed with a knife to admit water. After the wall has been completely soaked a scraper can be used to remove the old wallpaper.

After cleaning and priming, determine the number of wallpaper rolls needed. To do this, measure the height

and width of the area, multiply these figures then divide by the square footage listed on the roll. This number will be the number of double rolls needed for that wall.

When choosing your wallpaper, consider buying prepared vinyl wallpaper. It is the best paper for durability and easy application.

The next step is to measure and cut your wallpaper. Do this by holding the wallpaper against the wall. Measure and cut the strip leaving at least two

inches of excess at the ceiling and baseboard.

After cutting your wallpaper, roll the sheet paste side out and place in the wallpaper tray that has been filled half full with lukewarm water. Allow the roll to sit in the tray as directed by the manufacturer, usually about one minute. Remove the strip with both hands making sure that the strip is evenly wetted. Then, fold both ends of the strip to the center with the pasted

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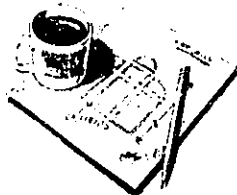
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