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of bulletins
that address
floorcovering issues

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In this Issue...

A glossary
of terms
commonly
used in
the flooring
industry

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And Now A Word About Flooring

Every business develops words, definitions and terminology that become part of the language of the trade. If you're a designer, specifier, facility manager or building manager, learning and using interiors language and lingo helps you communicate better with and to each other. You not only sound smarter, you are equipped to make more intelligent decisions. Understanding trade words can be essential to the integrity of the job itself. At the very least, it eliminates misunderstanding and confusion.

In this issue of *StarLog*, our goal is to familiarize our readers with commonly used flooring terms. You can't be an expert in everything from antimicrobial to zircon, but it is helpful to understand the basics. It's also valuable to be aware of multiple descriptions that may be used to describe the same product or process, which can vary from one region of the country to another. Some words have a slightly different meaning from one floor category to another. So, for those of you who are new to the world of flooring, and even for experienced professionals who are never too old to learn, here's a glossary of many, but certainly not all, terms that will help you speak the same language with your suppliers, your peers and your clients.



■ Cross-Category

Antimicrobial: The ability to resist or eliminate the growth of bacteria, fungi, yeast, mold and mildew created by the floor's natural ingredients or by adding a chemical treatment.

Antistatic: The ability to dissipate an electrostatic charge before it reaches the threshold of human sensitivity.

Below Grade, on Grade and Above Grade: Below ground level, on ground level and above ground level, respectively, relative to the floor's location.

Concrete: A hard, strong material made of a cementing material and a mineral aggregate combined with water.

Dimensional Stability: The ability to retain original dimensions during the service life of the product.

Direct Glue: Adhering the floor product directly to the subfloor.

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ): Describes the purity and quality of the air breathed by the occupants of a building.

LEED: Acronym for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a program of the United States Green Building Council (USGBC). LEED is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, materials and operation of high performance green buildings.

Slip Resistant: The ability to counteract the loss of traction.

Subfloor: The structural layer that provides support for design loadings.

Substrate: The underlying support surface to which the floor is installed.

Wearlayer: The portion of a manufactured hard, resilient or laminate floor covering that contains or protects the pattern and design, exclusive of temporary finishes or maintenance coatings.



■ Broadloom Carpet and Carpet Tile

Bow: Distortion shown by a deviation in direction perpendicular to the carpet pattern. Visible as a wavy pattern line when viewed across seams.

Buckling: Wrinkling, bubbling or ridging of carpet following installation.

Carpet: Textile fabrics used as floor covering and not designed as a

rug. Broadloom carpet is produced in widths wider than six feet. Carpet tiles, or modules, are generally 18 or 36 inches square.

Commercial Matching: Color matching within acceptable tolerances mutually agreed upon by the buyer and seller.

Cross Seams: Seams used to join the ends of carpet together.

Crushing (matting): Loss of tuft definition due to entanglement and compression of the pile yarns or fibers.

Hand: The tactile aesthetic qualities of carpet and textiles.

Pattern Repeat: The dimensions of the basic pattern unit in any type of patterned carpet. The repeat may be in the length and/or width.

Pattern Run Off: Carpet appears to “run off” rather than run parallel with the wall or to the adjacent seam.

Pile (face, nap or pile yarn): The visible wear surface of carpet consisting of yarn tufts in loop and/or cut configuration.

Power Stretch: A carpet installation method that uses tools to multiply the installer’s applied stretching force to fit the carpet to the space. Power stretching assures the best performance and a proper installation.

Selvage: The lengthwise, factory-finished edge portion of a carpet.

Side Match: A term related to color, describing the difference in shade or contrast of two or more carpets of the same color.

Skew: A form of distortion where the pattern on one side of the carpet is ahead of the pattern on the opposite side.

Tuft: The cut or uncut loops of a pile fabric. Tufted carpet is the most common method used to manufacture carpet.

Tuft Bind: The force required to pull a tuft from the carpet.

■ Carpet Backings

Attached Cushion (cushion back, high density foam): A cushioning material, such as natural or synthetic latex foam, rubber or polyurethane permanently bonded to the backing fabric side of a carpet to provide additional dimensional stability, thickness and padding.

Backings: The materials in a carpet other than the pile yarns.

1. Primary: Woven or nonwoven fabric into which pile yarn tufts are inserted by tufting needles. It is the carrier fabric, concealed under the pile yarn. Made typically from woven or nonwoven polypropylene.

2. Secondary (double back): Woven or nonwoven fabric reinforcement laminated to the back of tufted carpet, usually with latex adhesive, to enhance dimensional stability, strength, stretch resistance, lay-flat stiffness and hand. Made typically from woven jute or woven polypropylene.

3. Unitary: Carpet used in glue-down installations that has a high-quality latex back coating to increase tuft bind performance properties without the addition of a secondary backing.

■ Resilient and Hard Surface

Cushioned Vinyl: Any vinyl sheet flooring incorporating a foam layer as part of its construction.

Embossed: Having permanent multilevel surface produced by mechanical or chemical means.

Flash Coving: Extending sheet flooring up the wall a few inches to form a wall base integral with the flooring.

Heat Welded Seam: A seam produced by grooving abutting edges of resilient flooring and filling the groove with heated, fused or melted material to provide a bond and a seal.

Heterogeneous: Dissimilar ingredients or composition, characterized by a structural performance layer(s), a visual layer, and a protective top coat layer.

Homogeneous: Uniform ingredients or composition throughout the entire thickness of the floor.

Inlaid: A decorative pattern set into the flooring surface. The design may or may not extend through to a backing.



Linoleum: Linseed oil, pine rosin, resins, binders, cork and/or wood flour, mineral fibers and pigments, bonded to a fibrous or other suitable backing.

Luxury Vinyl Tile (LVT): High-resolution floor designs, often replicating natural materials such as wood or stone, in a resilient, easy to install and maintain structure. LVT is manufactured in tile and plank formats.

Printed: Pattern printed on the floor surface, protected with a wearlayer of transparent or translucent vinyl plastic.

Resilience: The ability to recover original thickness after being subjected to compressive forces or traffic.

Solid Vinyl: Composed of binders, fillers and pigments compounded with suitable stabilizers and processing aids.

Terrazzo: A form of mosaic floor made by embedding marble, onyx, granite or glass chips in cementitious or resinous materials.

Underlayment: A material placed under resilient flooring or other flooring to provide a suitable installation surface.

Vinyl Asbestos Tile (VAT): An obsolete form of resilient tile, composed of vinyl plastic binders, chrysotile asbestos fibers, mineral fillers and pigments.

Vinyl Composition Tile (VCT): Tile composed of binder, fillers and pigments.

■ Ceramic Tile

Ceramic: A body made from clay, or a mixture of clays and other ceramic material, having a glazed or unglazed face, and fired to produce specific physical properties.

Clay: A natural mineral aggregate that is plastic when wetted, rigid when dried and vitrified when fired at a high temperature.

Firing: The controlled heat treatment of ceramic ware in a kiln or furnace during the process of manufacture to produce the desired properties.

Glazed: The fused, impervious facial finish on a tile, composed of ceramic materials. Glazes are typically clear, white or colored.

Grout: The cementitious setting mix used for filling tile joints.

Mortar: A mixture of cement paste and fine aggregate.

Paver: Unglazed porcelain or natural clay tile.

Porcelain: A ceramic mosaic tile or paver that is dense, finegrained and smooth with an impervious face.

Quarry: Unglazed tile, usually six inches or more in surface area, made by an extrusion process from natural clay or shale.

Unglazed: A hard, dense tile of homogeneous composition, deriving color and texture from tile's materials.

Vitreous: Tile with water absorption of more than 0.5%, but not more than 3.0%.

Zircon: A vitreous ceramic that can be porcelain or whiteware.

■ Hardwood

Acrylic Impregnation: Acrylic that fills and supports wood's open cells, improving indentation and wear resistance.

Beveled (eased edge, micro-beveled): Chamfered board edges and ends that make the board edges/seams part of the floor design. The visual effect also helps disguise gaps and repairs.

Engineered: 100% genuine hardwood that's more dimensionally stable than solid hardwood. The surface layer is the species seen when the floor is installed. The supporting layers consist of multiple layers, or plies, of hardwood permanently glued in a cross-ply construction.

Cork: The bark of an oak species grown in Mediterranean climates. The cork is harvested from the tree's outer circumference without harming the tree, ground into granules and baked into a slab for use as flooring.

Parquet: A square, tile-format, solid hardwood floor made from scrap lumber, usually oak.

Plank: Any hardwood board width measuring three inches or more.

Prefinished: Hardwood boards with factory-applied stains and protective coatings. Prefinished hardwood reduces on-site preparation, and installation materials and labor.

Site-finished: Hardwood boards that require additional on-site surface preparation during installation, including staining and the addition of protective coatings.



Solid: Boards that are made from one piece of solid hardwood.

Continued on back page.

Strip: Any hardwood board measuring less than three inches wide.

Tongue and Groove: An installation system that connects boards together mechanically by slotting the “tongue” into the opposing “groove.” This locking system may avoid the need for additional adhesives or nails to install the hardwood to the surface below.

■ Laminate

Backing Layer: Found beneath the inner core, it is made with resin-saturated paper, creating a moisture barrier that protects the floor from warping.

High Density Fiberboard (HDF): A reinforced board used in the construction of a laminate’s inner core. It is often impregnated with a plastic resin (melamine) to increase the core’s strength, stability and resistance to moisture.

High Pressure Laminate (HPL): A process in which the laminate surface, inner layers and backing layer are fused in a multiple step press operation. This process creates the most durable laminate construction.

Image Design: The printed/photograph design layer of the laminate board or tile.

Impact Test: An industry test used for determining the resistance to shattering of a dried film by dropping a weight onto the finish.

Inner Core: The layer(s) that provides the floor’s structural strength and stability, usually made from high-density fiberboard.



Laminate: A floor made of a layered construction consisting of a wearlayer, image design layer, inner core and backing. Laminate formats include tiles and planks, with highly realistic images and textures.

Low Pressure Laminate (LPL):

A fusing process used primarily for residential laminate products.

Mitered Corners: Usually a 45-degree angle cut in the laminate to create custom borders and insets. These cuts require that a new groove be cut and a spline inserted prior to final installation.

Moisture Vapor Barrier: A film, usually polyethylene, used to impede or block the transmission of water from the subfloor up to the laminate structure.

■ Resources used for this glossary:

Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI): Carpet Primer ISBN0-89275-084-7

American Society for Testing and Materials: Publication ASTM F141-03

Armstrong World Industries: armstrong.com

Ceramic Tile Institute of America: ctia.org

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