



MATERIAL BENEFITS: Choose your floor covering carefully to suit the function of the room. From left, tile is the ideal solution in wet areas. Engineered wood floors are specifically designed to work in conjunction with underfloor heating. Marble is a beautiful permanent solution, while resilient flooring such as Amtico bounces back to its original form whenever something is dropped on it.

FLOORED BY DESIGN

Interiors

Flooring choices are fundamental and a considerable investment. **Jamie Hemsall** give his expert advice on choosing yours.

IN the midst of the winter gloom, many of us want to get a hint of spring by freshening up our homes.

Flooring often forms a part of that decision and is critical in the success or failure of your look and feel.

It is important not to simply replace your flooring with something similar, but to take time to consider the use of the room and people who might therefore be enjoying the ambience.

Your key considerations should be:

- * The volume of traffic that the room will be subject to and how durable it needs to be.
- * Is there likely to be moisture regularly present

(such as in a bathroom or utility room)?

- * Does the floor need to act as a sound barrier?
- * Do you want a maintenance-free finish?

■ * Do any of the occupants have asthma or allergies? Some carpets are more hypoallergenic than others.

■ * What sub-floor will your surface be laid upon? If you have under-floor heating, then engineered floor boards can be a better choice than solid wood.

■ * Overall budget – including installation.

The flooring types have very differing properties, so here are my guidelines to help you make an informed choice:

■ RESILIENT FLOORING:

Items such as vinyl (e.g. Karndean or Amtico) and linoleum can bounce back to their original form after something is dropped on them.

These make a good alternative to hard surfaces such as tile.

They are often flexible to lay, hardwearing with minimal maintenance; good in areas with moisture and most finishes are bacteria resistant.

■ **PORCELAIN & CERAMIC TILES:** These are relatively easy to maintain and perfect in areas with moisture or immediate access from the outside.

Without under-floor heating they can feel cool and you need to consider slip-resistance. They can also require a level sub-floor.

■ **WOOD:** Always gives a warm architectural finish and colour can be altered with staining. Wonderful for a more informal area. Will require regular



SOFT OPTION: Carpet adds warmth and helps reduce noise.

HARD CHOICES COULD BE SOUND

If you are looking for a very permanent solution which is ideal in wet areas consider stone and marble.

It's cooler than most other finishes, but ideal with under-floor heating as it retains warmth.

It's expensive and must be laid perfectly. Ideal for

bathrooms; hallways and garden rooms. Whatever your choice of flooring material, good preparation and fitting are essential.

■ **Jamie Hemsall** is a multi-award winning interior designer. For more information visit www.jamiehemsall.com

maintenance depending upon finish, but if cared for can be a very long-term and richly rewarding companion.

Can be temperamental if used in conjunction with under-floor heating where veneer engineered boards might be a better option.

Needs professional fitting to ensure safety and longevity. One of the more expensive flooring options.

■ **LAMINATE:** A firm favourite in the last decade as a cheap and easy to fit flooring solution.

Unsuitable for damp areas and can sound hollow when walked upon, so not recommended in flats or upstairs bedrooms.

Laminate is easy to maintain and available at a variety of price points.

■ **CARPETS:** A good solution in cooler areas as they add warmth and comfort; they also help reduce noise. Carpet may not be as durable