



Sponsored By



(866) SIR-4WEB  
www.sirllc.com

## Wood Flooring: There's Nothing Like the Real Thing

By, Steve Chase  
Date: 8/1/2006

Looking at sports surfacing manufacturers right now, it seems there are a lot of products out there attempting to replicate the appearance of wood flooring, without actually being wood. There are currently all types of wood-grained floors available, from rubber sheeting, to polyethylene tiles, to rubberized floor tiles - just to name a few. All of them use a light maple background, with either a marbling that represents wood grain, or a pattern of graining that repeats every few feet. It would seem that demand for a product like this is pretty high - especially if the number of manufacturers advertising these types of flooring products is any basis on which to judge.

I suppose that everyone recognizes the beauty of natural wood and its appropriateness for athletics and fitness. So, it makes sense that flooring products looking like wood, without actually being wood, are popular. It may also be appealing to those who believe wood is too expensive for most facilities. However, we've researched a number of these alternative flooring products, and we haven't found too many that are really that much less expensive than the genuine article - hardwood flooring. Certainly these products do not have the lifespan of your average wood floors. And, even if they were considerably cheaper, they may have to be replaced a number of times in the lifespan of an actual hardwood floor.

Perhaps the reason that these imitation wood flooring products are popular is because they are believed to be easier to install or to maintain than wood flooring. In some cases, that may be true. If you purchase an unfinished flooring system that must be installed, sanded and finished on-site, this is typically a lengthy process. However, a pre-finished wood floor can typically be laid in the same amount of time as many of the alternatives. As for maintenance, there are few surfaces that are easier to clean than hardwood, unless you consider resurfacing of a hardwood floor - which simply cannot be done with any of the alternatives.

Certainly there are applications where hardwood flooring simply can't be used, and alternative products are obviously better at performing in those areas. For example, hardwoods cannot be used outdoors, or anywhere where the humidity of the area cannot be controlled. A pool area, or even a room adjacent to a pool where the humidity levels can seep-over from the adjoining room, is simply not suited for a hardwood system. Also, there are other areas that plainly cannot be protected from water, such as a room that experiences periodic leaks, or where water is allowed to leech up from the ground beneath. Any flooring products would also likely experience some type of difficulty under these conditions, but certainly not to the point that a wood floor might.

There are also areas of the club where not all of the features of a wood floor are needed, but the wood aesthetic is desirable. Spinning rooms, for instance, really do not require the shock absorption or ball-bounce qualities that a traditional wood floor would provide, but it is still nice to have the "wood look" to the floor. Weight rooms are another area, where rubber tiles, designed to look like wood for aesthetic purposes only, are perfectly appropriate. After all, real wood flooring would certainly not survive long under that type of abuse any way.

However, if you're looking for a product that appears to be wood, but it is not, and you expect it to perform in areas where wood is traditionally found, I think that you'll be disappointed in the product's performance. I don't disparage these other products because we also believe that if there is a way to achieve the same performance that a hardwood floor offers at a cheaper price, we'd be eager to provide that option to our customers. The problem is that we haven't found anything that provides the same safety and benefits of solid hardwoods. Every product we have seen thus far, sacrifices some quality, whether it is ball response, traction, shock absorption, or longevity, for that lower price. We've seen a wide range of products used to replicate wood in court sports, even Formica counter top materials, but nothing that has made the marginal savings worth it to the end-user.

If you can find a wood look-alike that performs well in areas such as court sports or aerobics for a lower price than wood, then I'd say you should buy it. Then, send me a sample.

***Steve Chase is the General Manager of Fitness Flooring. He can be contacted at 866.735.5113, or by email at [exerflex@exerflex.com](mailto:exerflex@exerflex.com), or visit [www.exerflex.com](http://www.exerflex.com).***

---

Copyright © Club Solutions Magazine, No reproduction, in whole or in part, without written permission.