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Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

Wood Flooring vs. Wood-like Tile

Hardwood flooring has been the classic choice for homeowners for centuries, providing warmth, sophistication and durability. However, modern technology has brought us wood-like ceramic or porcelain tiles that mimic the natural look and texture of wood without the maintenance. Let's compare the pros and cons of hardwood flooring and wood-like tile to help you make an informed choice.

HARDWOOD FLOORS



Pros	Cons
Natural beauty, warm to the touch	Vulnerable to scratches from furniture, children or pets
Can be refinished or painted if damaged or to change the style	Not waterproof in wet areas like entryways, kitchens or baths
Adds to the historic quality of older homes	Can be creaky or uneven in humid climates
Adds to home's resale value	

WOOD-LIKE TILES



Huge selection of colors and styles	Tile lines will be visible; grout should be sealed and periodically cleaned
Very durable for day-to-day use	Hard to stand on for prolonged periods; difficult for pets, too
Easy to replace damaged sections	Slippery when wet; problematic for older residents
Easy to clean with many choices of cleaning products	Cold to the touch
Unaffected by humidity	Hard to update if styles change
	Can chip or crack from dropped items, and items dropped on tile are more likely to break



Planning for a Kitchen Island

A kitchen island can become the centerpiece of any kitchen. In addition to its aesthetic value, it also provides additional space for storage, prep work and dining. However, before installing a kitchen island, there are several factors homeowners should consider.

Size and shape	Purpose
Before installing a kitchen island, consider the size and shape of the kitchen. Depending on the room's layout, a rectangular or square-shaped island may work best to maximize functionality and flow. In larger, open-concept kitchens, it may be possible to install a more unique, curved or L-shaped island. Plan for enough clearance around the island to comfortably move around and accommodate seating.	Whether it's for meal prep, a cooking station, additional storage or a dining area, it's important to determine the primary purpose of the island when planning the design. For example, if the island will be used mainly for cooking or clean-up, be sure that you can run the proper plumbing, gas or electrical lines to the area. Consider lifestyle when deciding on the countertop: Are you prepared to handle the upkeep marble requires, or would butcher block or poured concrete be a better choice?
Storage	Budget
Storage space is a key feature in any kitchen, and a kitchen island can boost your storage options. Consider the types of storage you will need, such as drawers, cabinets or shelves, and if special inserts, such as tray dividers or spice racks, will make life easier. Think about the accessibility of the storage space, as well—cabinets and drawers that are too deep or long can reduce functionality.	Islands can range greatly in price, depending on their size, features and materials used. Determine what you can afford before making a purchase. Consider a prefabricated island instead of one that's custom-made to fit both budget and functionality needs.

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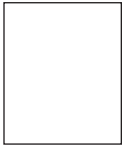


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Stair Railing Styles to Suit Your Design

Stair railings are an essential feature of every staircase, but it's vital to pick a style that complements your home's aesthetic while also providing safety.

Traditional

Traditional railing styles are classic and timeless, perfect for homes with a more traditional or colonial interior design. They're often made of wood and feature vertical balusters placed close together, providing safety while also being visually appealing. These styles are also available in wrought iron and steel, making them sturdy and durable.

Modern

If your interior design leans towards the modern

and contemporary, a minimalist railing style is the perfect choice. Cable and glass railing styles feature sleek and clean lines, offering an unobstructed view of the stairs and the surrounding space. They're popular for their safety features, making them a favorite for families with young children or pets.

Rustic

The rustic railing style is perfect for homeowners who want to add a touch of natural charm to their

home. Rustic railings often feature rough-hewn wood or branches, providing a connection to nature while being both durable and sturdy. They're ideal for log homes, cabins or homes with a more rustic aesthetic.

Art Deco

The Art Deco railing style is great for homeowners who want to add a touch of glamour and sophistication to their home, providing both safety and style simultaneously. Usually made of metal, these railings are characterized by their geometric designs that range from simple to intricate,



making them a statement piece in any home.

Craftsman and cottage

Craftsman-style railings perfectly blend traditional and modern railing styles, featuring clean lines, unadorned details and vertical spindles.

They're often made of wood and are a popular choice for bungalows or craftsman-style homes. Cottage-style railings can be very similar to their craftsman counterparts, with wooden elements brightened with paint.

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