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Laminate flooring on stairs with overhang

There are four basic components or layers of laminate flooring, each of which plays a specific role in the appearance and durability of the floor. Here they are, from bottom to top: a plastic, paper or melamine pad, also known as a balancing layer, stabilizes the soil and resists moisture. Medium-density fiberboard (MDF) or high-density fiberboard (HDF) make up the water-repellent substrate layer or core layer. Both MDF and HDF are made of wood fibres, which are compacted together with adhesive and resin. The photographic, decorative or pattern layer gives the floor its realistic appearance. This layer is essentially a photograph, usually constructed with several sheets of paper sandwiched with melamine resin. Realistic colors and beaded gloss color add depth and a realistic look to the image. The sample layer begins with a large photograph of wood grain, which is divided into sections the size of the desired laminate plank. Since the same photo is used for many boards, it is possible to have repeated patterns in a case of boards. The protective top layer is the wear layer. It is usually built from an aluminum oxide clearcoat. The coating can range from low to high gloss, depending on the taste of the consumer. This layer prevents moisture from penetrating. These layers are crumbled together and fused with high heat and intense pressure. Some boards have a thicker core than others, which affects overall durability -- the thicker the product, the stiffer the bottom will be. The core of the product is usually measured in millimeters and depends on the quality of the product and the manufacturer. There are four common thickness measurements for laminate flooring: 6 millimeters (lowest cost, lowest durability) 8 millimeters 10 millimeters 12 millimeters (highest cost, highest durability) What should you consider in addition to the thickness when shopping for laminate floors? Find out on the next page. The spruce uses cookies to give you a great user experience. By using The Spruce, you accept our Use of cookies.