1959

EC59-1137 The Surface for the Purpose

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WHAT DO YOU NEED?

The variety of surfacing materials and styles available make it possible for a homemaker to satisfy nearly any need and taste. No single product has all the qualities for a perfect all-purpose finish, however. One material may be suitable for one use and be a poor choice for another. The characteristics of the different materials have been summarized in the table on pages 2 and 3 to help you select a surfacing for your needs.

Combinations of materials are frequently desirable within a house since surfaces must withstand a variety of conditions. Stain resistance is important in a kitchen and laundry, where foods and bleaches are present. Hallways are in little danger of exposure to these hazards. Here abrasion from dirt and sand might be the prime factor.

The multitude of products on the market can be classified according to their properties, process of manufacture, and resultant characteristics. Your particular needs will determine which considerations are most important to you.

The most expensive material is not always the most satisfactory for the purpose. "Will acids, alkalis or grease be in contact with the material? Will traffic be heavy across this surface? Will we want to change the decor in a year or two?" Questions such as these will help your family determine what your needs are or what service you expect to receive from the material selected. The following table will tell you what performance you may expect from the different materials.

Your dealer can tell you the classification of the trade names in his stock.
### Characteristics of Surfacing Materials

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<td>Floors above grade</td>
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<td>Floors below or on grade</td>
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✓ = appropriate  
- = not appropriate

* Vinyl from one manufacturer has a special backing which is unaffected by moisture and alkali.

**Though resistance of woods to knife cuts is poor and appearance of counter is damaged, wood is the best material for a cutting block because it does not dull knives as much as other materials.

Information on this chart is adapted from:
- Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station - Work Counter Surface Finishes, Research Bul. 764 - 1955
- Small Homes Council - Plastics as Building Materials, Circular D9.0 - 1956
- Counter Surfaces, Circular P9.1 - 1958
- Flooring Materials, Circular P4.6 - 1955
- Pennsylvania State University - Buying Smooth Surface Floor Coverings, Extension Circular 383 - 1957
- University of Wyoming - Floors, Extension Circular 153 - 1957
WHAT WILL IT COST?

Most materials for surfacing are priced by the square foot or square yard. Sixteen 9 x 9 inch tiles or thirty-six 6 x 6 inch tiles make a square yard. Cost per tile must be converted to cost per square yard for comparison with other materials.

Some materials may be purchased in several different gauges or thicknesses. The price increases with the thickness. Actual prices will vary some with location, but relative price will probably be constant. Some of the most common materials are listed below in order of decreasing cost.

Counters
- Stainless steel
- Ceramic tile
- Slate
- Hardwood
- Laminated melamine
- Vinyl
- Laminated melamine
- Inlaid linoleum 1/8"

Floors
- Ceramic tile
- Brick or slate
- Vinyl
- Cork tile 1/8"
- Rubber tile 1/8"
- Vinyl asbestos tile 1/8"
- Wood
- Colored concrete
- Inlaid linoleum 1/8"
- Asphalt tile 1/8"
- Printed enamel

The cost of the material itself comprises 50% to 75% of the total cost. The expense of installation depends on: the shape of the area to be covered; the complexity of the design; whether counter is purchased in stock sizes; fabricated in a shop, or custom built on the job; the condition of the surface to be covered; and local labor rates. Type of coving, joining, and edging on counters are also considerations affecting total cost.

IS INSTALLATION IMPORTANT?

Proper installation is essential for satisfactory results from any of the materials. A simple installation may be a home project. Different products, however, require different handling. Manufacturers' recommendations as to under-surface treatment and the kind and application of adhesive, should be obtained from your dealer. Tiles of linoleum and vinyl are more easily installed floorings than rolls of the material, but because of the numerous seams necessary, they are not suitable counter surfacing. Stainless steel and laminated plastic must be professionally handled for success.