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Layers of Flooring

Directly below your feet is an ingenious method of flooring that has been used for centuries, and is still employed today. Every flooring system is actually a complex system of multiple layers: structural joists, subfloor, underlayment, and surface flooring. The smooth surface flooring that you see is really a layered “sandwich” composed of different layers, each of which serving an essential function in making a floor look good and perform adequately. Layering makes it easier to change the visible floor if you get tired of the look or if it becomes damaged. The one thing the top layer, floor covering, does not do is provide structural support. Below is a brief overview of the different layers that make up a flooring system.

- **Bottom Layer – Joists**
 - o The joist system is a series of parallel structural members that run between beams or load bearing walls and holds up the entire floor. Joists are typically made from lumber ranging in sizes from 2X8 to 2X12, depending on the load the floor is expected to carry. The joist layer is not present in basements floors or in slab home construction, where floors rest directly on concrete slabs.

- **Third Layer – Subfloor**
 - o This is a sturdy structural layer resting directly on the joists. Usually made of plywood or OSB, the subfloor provides a stable surface not just for floor coverings but for all of the heavy “live load” elements in the living space, such as furniture, showers and tubs, cabinets, and people. Even though the joists have side bracing, the subfloor also acts as additional bracing to control any lateral movements in the joists. At times, the term subfloor is incorrectly used to refer to the thin layer of foam padding, cement board, or plywood that lies immediately under the surface floor covering.

- **Second Layer – Underlayment**
 - o Sitting on top of the subfloor is an underlayment that smooths out the subfloor and provides a flat, level surface for the finished flooring surface. Unlike the subfloor, this is not a structural element, and it provides no strength to the floor. There are various different materials that can be used for the underlayment. These are selected based on the type of surface floor covering being installed. Common materials include, cement fiberboard, plywood, cement board, foam and cork padding and troweled mortar.

- **Top Layer – Floor Covering**
 - o The floor covering is the visible, decorative surface that you walk on and see. This layer might be ceramic tile, hardwood, laminate planks, natural stone, luxury vinyl tile, carpet, or many other materials. This layer can be changed out if needed.

In some instances there may only be one layer of flooring. An example of this is a stained concrete floor. Also in older homes solid hardwood flooring could be nailed directly to the joists. On the other hand, floor systems sometimes have more than three layers. In homes that have been extensively remodeled, it is not unusual to see many layers. This could be due to the fact that previous owners did not want to incur the expense or take on the labor of removing unneeded floor layers. Until next time my friends, be prepared and stay safe.

October 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 IFMA Luncheon	4 ACA Luncheon	5 CE Class	6
7	8	9 SACA Luncheon	10 -- TASBO Conference	11 San Marcos-----	12 SABOMA Clay Shoot Tourn	13
14	15	16	17 IIASA Golf	18 IFMA Golf -----FIWT Convention ----	19	20
21	22	23	24	25 IWSA Luncheon	26	27
28	29	30	31			

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Events

October 3: IFMA Luncheon
 October 4: ACA Luncheon
 October 5: CE Class
 October 9: SACA Luncheon
 October 10-11: TASBO Conference
 October 12: BOMA SA Clay Shoot Tourn
 October 17: IIASA Golf
 October 17: IFMA Golf
 October 18-19: FIWT Convention
 October 25: IWSA Luncheon

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