

Types of Gym Flooring

For most home as well as commercial gyms, rubber provides the widest range of benefits for use as a gym floor. Rubber has a high coefficient of friction in both dry and wet conditions, meaning it stays slip resistant even when users are sweating heavily during their workouts. Rubber's natural resiliency provides much better sound deadening than vinyl, tile, and similar hard surfaces. Rubber's natural resiliency also increases users' comfort during floor exercises, cushioning knees and ankles from impact. Finally, rubber's durability provides outstanding protection from damage from free weight and heavy strength equipment to concrete basement floors as well as expensive hardwood floors.

Recycled rubber is manufactured from used tires, has a characteristic "used tire" smell, and is relatively inexpensive. It is very durable but is only available in limited color options- primarily black or black with color flecks. It is often an excellent choice for basement or garage gyms where aesthetics may be less important than in the main living areas of the house. While the smell lessens somewhat over time, it is an inherent part of the flooring and will never fully go away

Some manufacturers use low grade/ low cost recycled rubber. These recycled rubber products cost little to produce and sell, are characterized by a strong petroleum smell, and are generally sold through national retail chain stores. These low grade recycled products are manufactured outside the U.S to low quality standards using scraps of low grade rubber from a variety of sources that are unable to be vulcanized, and must be glued together with strong smelling urethane adhesives. Higher grade recycled rubber is typically manufactured in the U.S. using tires that are free of metal and other foreign debris and that are vulcanized under extreme heat and pressure, not glued together with adhesives. The result is a mat that is extremely strong and durable, maintains its shape, and has less odor than lower quality recycled rubber products.

Virgin rubber flooring contains no recycled rubber and has none of the used tile smell some users find objectionable. Virgin rubber tiles are available in a broad range of colors, patterns, interlock options- including some with hidden tongue-in-groove style interlocks- and are an excellent choice for mid to high-end home gyms, or homeowners who simply find the smell of recycled rubber objectionable.

Virgin rubber flooring is more expensive- up to 2-3X the cost of recycled rubber- but provides superior shock absorption, "rebound," and durability over the lifetime of the floor. Virgin rubber provides easier cleanability than recycled rubber than recycled rubber due to its closed cell construction.

For homeowners seeking to do exercise routines that will include dance style movements- particularly side-to-side foot slide- the lower slip resistance of modular Vinyl Tiles is an excellent choice. While vinyl tiles are typically less resilient than rubber tiles, a rubber underlayment often may be used to provide increased sound deadening and cushioning.

Carpet Tiles provide good insulation value, sound control, and lower cost, but are not nearly as durable or easy to clean as harder surfaces. Additionally, fitness equipment manufacturers note that airborne fibers from the carpet will work their way into the inner workings or the equipment that may lessen the service life of the machines.

EVA Foam Tiles provide another lightweight, low cost option. Foam tiles will dent on impact and are not recommended for free weight areas or areas requiring a high level of durability. But for homeowners seeking to add color and warmth to a basement floor with a limited budget, foam is a soft and comfortable gym flooring.

Recommended Installation

For most homeowners, particularly those with gyms in their basements, there is little advantage to glue down rubber flooring- typically available in rolls or non-interlocking tiles. Moisture in the concrete and water from incidental flooring plays havoc with adhesives, and will often cause tiles to de-laminate from the floors

Interlocking rubber and vinyl tiles install loose laid without tapes or adhesives are unaffected by moisture. Most rubber and vinyl gym flooring is pretty substantial - weighing on average 2 to 4 pounds a square foot. It stays in place securely even during high impact weight lifting and workouts. Interlocking tiles do not require that small cracks in the concrete be filled, or that the floor be perfectly level. Most tiles may be cut with a straight edge and utility knife, and is well within the skill range of most do-it-yourselfers.

Non- interlocking rubber mats- typically found in 4' x 6' sizes, are best used as stand alone mats under individual pieces of fitness equipment. They are not a good choice to use as overall flooring in a gym as they will separate at the seams, which is a potential tripping hazard. Typically, non-interlocking mats are not cut perfectly square - another reason they are best used as stand alone mats.

Article submitted by:

Rich Meyer
Sales Manager
My Gym Floor

www.mygymfloor.com