

WATERPROOF VS WATER RESISTANT

The two labels sound alike and promise different things. Waterproof means water cannot damage the floor material, no matter how long it stands. Water resistant means the floor survives spills that get wiped up in time. This guide separates the two promises and grades each flooring type.

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Two different promises

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TWO DIFFERENT PROMISES

WATERPROOF

Water cannot get into the material or harm it. Time does not matter. A flooded night ends with mopping, not replacement.

**PORCELAIN • CERAMIC • SPC
VINYL**

WATER RESISTANT

The surface sheds water long enough for you to wipe it up. Time matters. Standing water finds seams and edges.

LAMINATE • WOOD

WHAT STANDING WATER DOES

The same overnight leak, four floors.

AFTER A SUPPLY LINE LEAKS OVERNIGHT

Porcelain tile	Nothing. Mop up and dry the room.
SPC vinyl	The planks are unharmed. Dry the subfloor beneath them.
Laminate	Edges swell where water found the joints. Swollen boards stay swollen.
Solid wood	Cupping starts within hours. Sanding sometimes recovers it, replacement often follows.

MATERIAL BY MATERIAL

WATERPROOF PORCELAIN & CERAMIC The tile takes in almost no water. Porcelain absorbs half a percent or less, which is why it serves inside pools. The joints are cement, so the grout wants care, and the floor itself is as waterproof as flooring gets.	WATERPROOF SPC VINYL Fully waterproof. Standing water from a spill or a leak does not swell it. Mop it dry and keep using the floor. The core is stone powder bound in vinyl. There is no wood fiber to swell.
WATER RESISTANT	WATER RESISTANT

LAMINATE

Handles spills that get wiped up. Do not let water stand on it.

The core is wood fiber. Sealed edges slow water down and do not stop it.

WOOD

A finished surface sheds a wiped spill.

Standing water reaches the wood and the wood moves. Baths and laundries are the wrong rooms for it.

THE ROOM TEST

WHAT TO DEMAND, BY ROOM

Bathrooms and laundry

Waterproof

Kitchens

Waterproof is the safe answer

Basements and below grade

Waterproof

Bedrooms and living rooms

Either. Spills are rare and small.

Around the pool

Waterproof, rated for outdoors.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

Is porcelain tile waterproof?

Yes, as a material. It absorbs half a percent of its weight or less, which is why it serves in pools. The grout joints are the part to maintain.

Is laminate flooring waterproof?

Most laminate is water resistant. The wood-fiber core swells if water stands long enough to reach it. Wipe spills promptly and it lasts.

What makes SPC vinyl waterproof?

The core is stone powder bound in vinyl. There is no wood fiber to swell. Water that slips between planks reaches an unharmed core and a subfloor that needs drying, not a ruined floor.

Does a waterproof floor protect the subfloor?

No. Water that gets past seams or edges still reaches the subfloor and must be dried. Waterproof describes the flooring material, not the room.

Which rooms truly need waterproof floors?

Bathrooms, laundries, mudrooms and anything below grade. Kitchens are close behind because appliances fail without warning.

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954 278 8022 • infousa@porcemall.com

CONTACT

954 278 8022

infousa@porcemall.com

Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm

ORLANDO BRANCH

7530 Currency Dr

Orlando, FL 32809

407 730 9074

MAIN OFFICE

3101 SW 13th Drive

Deerfield Beach, FL 33442

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