

“With tile, you can really consider your floor a blank canvas and create a piece of artwork,” Cieslak says. “It can give a room a very classic look (think tumbled marble), or a very trendy look with a fun mosaic pattern.”

## Create with paint

Those who are partial to either a worn-in, rustic charm or a highly creative and unique floor should consider painting their existing wood or laminate floors. “Here’s where you can get a bit more adventurous with color and not have it cost a lot,” Cieslak says.

Marusin calls painted wood floors “chic, unpredictable and beautiful.” She recommends considering floor paints by Farrow & Ball, which offers “the most beautiful paint colors that can be used on floors,” she says, adding that, “painted plank in a matte finish adds a beachy, homey, cozy style to a weathered floor surface.”

The design freedom that painted floors offer allow you to create any focal point you want. “Patterns are so easy to do in paint, and can give a small area like an entry or foyer real power,” say Pam Lamaster-Millett, Linda Searl and Greg Howe, principals of Chicago-based Searl Lamaster Howe Architects.

## Design plans

When creating the design of your flooring, Rien says, “The key is to choose a flooring plan that is multilayered. So, for the entire floor of a home, I suggest a base that works room to room, and then choices for area rugs that can define space for rooms or spaces in an open-plan layout. I try to encourage a strong investment in the base—and that it be reflective, so that light carries from room to room. Then, when it comes to area rugs: texture, texture, texture. The key is to choose something that will highly contrast with the base flooring. Contrast will create a focal point in the flooring.”

Lamaster-Millett, Searl and Howe agree with Rien’s emphasis on contrast. “Consider other finishes that will be in the room, and select a floor that will provide some contrast,” they recommend. “For example, dark floors can help ground a room full of white furnishings.” They also recommend mixing patterns, “Planks in one room, penny tiles in the bath, mixing widths of planks—variety is a popular flooring trend today,” they say.

## A big decision

Choosing your home’s flooring is a decision that will affect the design of your space for years to come. “Consider flooring as a part of your design,” Marusin says. “Define areas and make transitions stand out. Floors are not to be forgotten, so let them tell the story.” 🏠

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