

# Lauan Plywood

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Lauan plywood is typically made from the wood of trees found in the southern Pacific Rim, and so it does tend to be softer and lighter than some types of plywood, which excludes it from being used widely as a building material. However, 1/4" lauan plywood is a popular choice as an underlayment among remodelers. It has a solid track record and is readily available. All resilient floor manufacturers allow lauan plywood under at least some resilient floor applications and some manufacturers do recommend it as an underlayment for all applications.

There are two types of lauan: Type 1, with an exterior glue and Type 2 with water-resistant glue. Only Type 1, which is more resistant to delaminating, should be installed under resilient flooring. The "type" is stamped on the very edge of the panel, usually on the 4-foot edge. Three face-grades are available - BB, CC and OVL (overlay). BB is the highest grade and should be used whenever possible.

APA's installation guidelines for 1/4-inch plywood should be followed when installing lauan plywood, but installers BEWARE: Lauan is made under a wall-panel specification of the International Hardwood Products Association (IHPA).

NOTE: No manufacturing specification supports the use or gauges performance of Lauan as an underlayment.

## **Don't Fill Nail Holes**

Whatever underlayment is used, all gouges, gaps, chips and sunken edges must be filled with a patching compound and sanded flat. Most resilient floor manufacturers specify a Portland cement-based compound mixed with latex. Other less effective fillers like calcium sulfate, plaster-of-Paris or gypsum mixed with a latex binder are readily available too. With the exception of hardboard, all the joints between panels must be filled and leveled. But don't fill the nail holes. If a nail works loose, it can force the patching compound up and form a small bump in the finish floor. Instead, drive the nail heads just below the surface of the plywood and leave the holes unfilled.

Specifying and installing underlayment for resilient floor covering seems like a game of dodge-the-bullet. Everyone wants to pass the responsibility for a failed floor onto someone else. The safest course to follow is one paved by common sense. Know what you are asking your material to do and understand how your material will perform.

## **APA Plywood**

Tried-and-true is appealing in this environment where everyone wants to blame the other guy for problems that might arise. Plywood gets a clean bill-of-health from everyone. All resilient flooring manufacturers approve the use of appropriately graded APA plywood under all types of resilient flooring, provided it is installed correctly.

Approved plywood underlayment for resilient floor coverings have the following characteristics noted in their grade standards or stamp markings

"Underlayment" or "plugged cross bands"

Exposure classification

Exposure 1 - limited exposure to moisture

Exterior - repeated exposure to moisture

Fully sanded face (not PTS, plugged and touch-sanded)