

BS 5325:2021



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Installation of textile floor coverings — Code of practice

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Foreword

Publishing information

This British Standard is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 31 July 2021. It was prepared by Technical Committee PRI/3, *Textile floor coverings*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to the committee manager.

Supersession

This British Standard supersedes [BS 5325:2001](#), which is withdrawn.

Information about this document

This is a full revision of the standard, and introduces the following principal changes:

- new/revised methods of installation;
- new/revised application products; and
- health and safety and legislative issues.

This revision has been drafted, where possible, to align with the format of [BS 8203:2017](#) and also, where appropriate, uses the same wording so as not to cause any confusion or differences. This means that users who install both textile and resilient floor coverings can use both standards more easily.

This publication can be withdrawn, revised, partially superseded or superseded. Information regarding the status of this publication can be found in the Standards Catalogue on the BSI website at bsigroup.com/standards, or by contacting the Customer Services team.

Where websites and webpages have been cited, they are provided for ease of reference and are correct at the time of publication. The location of a webpage or website, or its contents, cannot be guaranteed.

Use of this document

As a code of practice, this British Standard takes the form of recommendations and guidance. It is not to be quoted as if it were a specification. Users are expected to ensure that claims of compliance are not misleading.

Users may substitute any of the recommendations in this British Standard with practices of equivalent or better outcome. Any user claiming compliance with this British Standard is expected to be able to justify any course of action that deviates from its recommendations.

Presentational conventions

The provisions of this standard are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is “should”.

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Where words have alternative spellings, the preferred spelling of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary is used (e.g. “organization” rather than “organisation”).

The word “should” is used to express recommendations of this standard. The word “may” is used in the text to express permissibility, e.g. as an alternative to the primary recommendation of the clause. The word “can” is used to express possibility, e.g. a consequence of an action or an event.

Notes and commentaries are provided throughout the text of this standard. Notes give references and additional information that are important but do not form part of the recommendations.

Commentaries give background information.

Contractual and legal considerations

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1 Scope

This British Standard gives recommendations for the installation of textile floor coverings in new or existing buildings. It covers the installation of all products composed of textile material with a pile or non-pile use surface and includes the laying of modular carpet, e.g. tiles and planks. It details suitable methods of design and installation and advises on the selection of the materials required for their implementation.

This British Standard does not include advice on cleaning and maintenance but does include guidance on the decisions made at the design stage which assist cleaning and maintenance and enable the installation to give satisfactory service.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes provisions of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies.¹⁾ For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

[BS 7953](#), *Entrance flooring systems – Selection, installation and maintenance*

[BS 8103-3](#), *Structural design of low-rise buildings – Part 3: Code of practice for timber floors and roofs for housing*

[BS 8204-1](#), *Screeds, bases and in situ floorings – Part 1: Concrete bases and cementitious levelling screeds to receive floorings – Code of practice*

[BS 8204-5](#), *Screeds, bases and in situ floorings – Part 5: Mastic asphalt underlays and wearing surfaces – Code of practice*

[BS 8204-7](#), *Screeds, bases and in-situ floorings – Part 7: Pumpable self-smoothing screeds – Code of practice*

[BS 8215](#), *Code of practice for design and installation of damp-proof courses in masonry construction*

[BS 8300-2](#), *Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment – Part 2: Buildings – Code of practice*

[BS 9999](#), *Fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings – Code of practice*

[BS EN 204:2016](#), *Classification of thermoplastic wood adhesives for non-structural applications*

BS EN 300, *Oriented Strand Boards (OSB) – Definitions, classification and specifications*

BS EN 312, *Particleboards – Specifications*

BS EN 313-2, *Plywood – Classification and terminology – Part 2: Terminology*

BS EN 314-2, *Plywood – Bonding quality – Part 2: Requirements*

[BS EN 350](#), *Durability of wood and wood-based products – Testing and classification of the durability to biological agents of wood and wood-based materials*

BS EN 622-2:2004, *Fibreboards – Specifications – Part 2: Requirements for hardboards*

BS EN 622-3:2004, *Fibreboards – Specifications – Part 3: Requirements for medium boards*

BS EN 622-5:2009, *Fibreboards – Specifications – Part 5: Requirements for dry process boards (MDF)*

BS EN 635-2:1995, *Plywood – Classification by surface appearance – Part 2: Hardwood*

BS EN 636, *Plywood – Specifications*

¹⁾ Documents that are referred to solely in an informative manner are listed in the Bibliography.

BS EN 1307, *Textile floor coverings – Classification*

BS EN 12825, *Raised access floors*

BS EN 13986:2004+A1:2015, *Wood-based panels for use in construction – Characteristics, evaluation of conformity and marking*

BS EN 14499, *Textile floor coverings – Minimum requirements for carpet underlays*

BS EN 15283-2:2008+A1:2009, *Gypsum boards with fibrous reinforcement – Definitions, requirements and test methods – Part 2: Gypsum fibre boards*

BS EN 61340-4-1, *Electrostatics – Part 4-1: Standard test methods for specific applications – Electrical resistance of floor coverings and installed floors*

BS EN 61340-5-1, *Electrostatics – Part 5-1: Protection of electronic devices from electrostatic phenomena – General requirements*

BS EN IEC 61340-4-5, *Electrostatics – Part 4-5: Standard test methods for specific applications – Methods for characterizing the electrostatic protection of footwear and flooring in combination with a person*

BS EN ISO 12951, *Textile floor coverings – Determination of mass loss, fibre bind and stair nosing appearance change using the Lisson Tretrad machine*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard, the terms and definitions given in [BS 6100-0](#), BS ISO 2424 and the following apply.

3.1 anhydrite screed

formulated flowing screed based on hydraulically setting calcium sulfate

3.2 base

supporting structure to which the floor covering is to be applied

3.3 carpet underlay

coherent layer of textile or other material placed beneath an exposed floor covering

NOTE It can be fibrous, non-fibrous or a combination. It provides underfoot comfort and sound-absorbing and energy-absorbing properties.

3.4 concrete base

concrete slab cast as part of the building construction

3.5 crotch

junction of the lower edge of the riser with the rearmost edge of a stair tread

3.6 dry screed panels

factory made flooring system comprising interlocking calcium sulphate (gypsum) based board panels with fibrous reinforcement, installed directly to a solid subfloor or on an under-structure of wooden batons or other supporting components as applicable, providing a load bearing structure for the fitting out of a building

NOTE Dry screed panels can comprise an integral acoustic layer to provide additional acoustic properties.

3.7 fabricated underlay

wood-based panel applied to a subfloor/base/floating floor to provide a smooth, even surface suitable for the installation of a floor covering

3.8 flexible

generic term for floor coverings which can be bent over a mandrel under specified conditions

3.9 floor covering

product prefabricated in sheet, tile or plank form which can be used to cover floors from wall to wall

3.10 flowing screed

in-situ applied material that sets hydraulically or by chemical cure

NOTE This is normally a proprietary compound used in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. It is poured or pumped directly onto the concrete slab to form a smooth level surface, ready to receive most floor coverings.

3.11 impregnation

treatment of a base or a screed by application of a liquid product intended to penetrate the pores without forming a continuous layer on the surface

3.12 in-situ underlay

aggregate filled underlay based on mastic asphalt or specially formulated cement and binder that is applied over cementitious and similar bases to provide a smooth, even surface

3.13 interlay

thin, flexible sheet supplied in 1 m to 2 m wide rolls

NOTE This interlay is laid below foam-backed carpets to facilitate easy removal and to stop foam adhesion to the subfloor. Dust and other subfloor contamination are stopped from being transferred onto the underfelt or floor covering. The interlay gives enhanced thermal insulation properties to the floor covering.

3.14 levelling layer

layer applied to compensate for unevenness and differences in height in the base, to accommodate services or to give a uniform absorbency where water-based adhesives are to be used

3.15 levelling screed

screed finished to obtain a defined level and to receive the final flooring

3.16 mastic asphalt

mixture of bitumen and an inert mineral aggregate

3.17 nosing

projecting edge of a step where tread and riser meet projecting edge of a step or a metal or plastics finishing profile fixed in this position

3.18 primer

liquid product applied to a subfloor, or base, prior to the application of either smoothing compound or adhesive, to seal a porous base and aid adhesion of the subsequent application

3.19 raised access floor

factory-made flooring system comprising panels supported on an under-structure of pedestals and/or stringers or other components as applicable, providing a load-bearing structure for the fitting out of a building

3.20 riser

vertical part of a step

3.21 screed

sand and cement topping applied over a concrete base slab and finished to receive the floor covering

3.22 shading

optical effect in the appearance of textile floor coverings due to localized alterations in the orientation of the fibres, tufts or loops

NOTE This is not a real change in hue but a difference in light reflection.

3.23 smoothing underlayment

compound applied to a subfloor to provide a smooth, even surface suitable for the installation of a floor covering

3.24 surface damp-proof membrane

material applied to the surface of the subfloor to control the passage of water vapour

3.25 surface preparation

set of operations carried out on the subfloor to allow the floor covering to be laid correctly

3.26 transition strip

finishing element which helps to protect a junction between two floor coverings which could be different in type or thickness

3.27 tread

horizontal part of a step

3.28 underlay

layer applied to the subfloor to achieve a smooth, flat or level surface

3.29 underlayment

thin layer applied to a screed to provide a smooth and/or flat surface to receive the floor covering

4 Exchange of information**4.1 General**

In order for the correct floor covering to be installed in appropriate conditions, and at the right time, all parties should have a clear understanding of the requirements of the project, e.g. new build or refurbishment, and of the implications for all concerned. To ensure that this is achieved, there should be wide consultation between all parties involved in the project, including subcontractors and materials suppliers. This consultation should start early in the design stage but should continue throughout the contract, especially if requirements or timescales change and as new subcontract work is initiated.

NOTE As each project is unique, it is impossible to give a definitive list of the information to be exchanged, but [4.2](#) to [4.9](#) give typical examples.

4.2 Project

The name and location of projects and personnel involved in pre-contract negotiations should be identified.

4.3 Contract conditions

A programme for commencement and completion of work should be defined, including any specific requirement for sequenced completion.

4.4 Special attendance

Access, unloading, hoisting and storage facilities, heat, light and power and any additional items considered necessary to expedite the work should be provided.

4.5 Design (see also Clause 6)

4.5.1 General

The flooring layout and specifications, based on building type and occupational uses, should be provided, for example:

- a) type of use – building, rooms;
- b) type and density of foot and/or wheeled traffic;
- c) specific requirements: fire resistance period, acoustic absorption level, slip resistance;
- d) particulars of use – staining, potentially abrasive conditions; and
- e) compliance with [BS 8300-2](#).

NOTE Attention is drawn to the Equality Act 2010 [[1](#)].

4.5.2 Floor details

The completed drawings/specification should provide comprehensive information on:

- a) whether upper floor, ground floor or below ground level;
- b) whether ground supported or suspended construction;
- c) particulars of any underfloor heating installation or security installation;
NOTE 1 More information on underfloor heating is given in [Annex A](#).
- d) position and treatment of expansion joints;
- e) curing and drying times of screeds and bases likely to be required before the installation of floor coverings to ensure appropriate dryness (see [6.2.4](#));
- f) screed or base with finished floor level, permissible departure from datum and class of surface regularity required;
NOTE 2 More information on surface regularity is given in [Annex C](#).
- g) in refurbishment work, the type and condition of existing base or floor finish and any type of treatment required;
- h) type of damp-proof membrane and position within the floor construction, in particular the need for a surface applied membrane where likely drying times for the base exceed the time available in the programme;
- i) choice of substrate, underlayment, adhesives, intermediate products and floor coverings;

- j) requirements for jointing, e.g. direction of material and position of seams, or the position and type of expansion joints profiles; and
- k) size, position and design of entrance flooring systems (see [BS 7953](#)).

4.5.3 Entrance flooring systems

The size, position and design of the entrance zone at the design stage should be in accordance with [BS 7953](#).

NOTE Entrance flooring systems reduce the dirt, grit and water carried into the building by foot traffic, and hence reduce wear and the risk of slipping when the building is in service.

4.5.4 Associated details

Details of abutments, skirtings, services (embedded or sleeved), movement joints, separating strips, pattern or border details and junctions with other adjacent flooring should be provided.

4.5.5 Shading

Shading cannot usually be attributed to a fault of manufacture or installation, but architects and specifiers should be aware of this phenomenon in certain styles of carpets.

4.6 Testing

Details of any conformity testing of the base, screed and floor covering that is to be conducted, and the party to be responsible for this testing, should be provided. The implications should be defined in accordance with the programme described in [4.3](#). For instance, the responsibility should be defined for ensuring that bases or screeds meet the specified standards of level, smoothness, dryness and soundness (impact crushing resistance) before any subsequent or finishing trades are called to commence work.

NOTE In the case of new build installations, this is the responsibility of the main contractor.

4.7 Health and safety

Arrangements for liaison and cooperation on health and safety requirements between the different parties in the contract should be established.

4.8 Responsibilities

Responsibilities for cleaning the construction on completion and giving it initial protection should be defined.

4.9 Maintenance

The customer should be left with adequate details of the maintenance required to enable the floor covering to perform satisfactorily in use. The recommendations should include details of the various types of cleaning and maintenance needed and the timescales to which they should be carried out.

NOTE It is preferable that such instructions be in clear, written form and cover the recommended maintenance methods appropriate for all the types of floor coverings installed.

5 Materials (see also [Clause 6](#))

5.1 Carpet underlays

Carpet underlays should be in accordance with BS EN 14499.

NOTE 1 Carpet underlays usually improve the walking comfort, impact sound insulation, thermal insulation and carpet life and can smooth minor surface irregularities of subfloors.

When choosing underlays for use in either domestic or commercial installations, reference should be made to BS EN 14499, which defines the types of underlay available and details the areas of suitability for all types as an aid to their selection. Care should be taken in the choice of a carpet underlay and it should always be matched to the area in which it is to be laid. Carpet underlays are not suitable for carpet tiles (see Table 1).

NOTE 2 There might be certain products or situations for which the manufacturer recommends no carpet underlay, e.g. fibre bonded materials.

Manufacturers of textile floor coverings sometimes stipulate that their products are installed by overall adhesion. In such cases, the benefits of the use of a carpet underlay can be retained by the use of one of the proprietary systems in which the underlay is adhered to the substrate and the carpet to the underlay.

Any recommendations by the carpet manufacturer or the underlay manufacturer should be followed.

Adhesives should be chosen which are compatible with both the materials used in the system and the substrate. Advice in the case of secondary backed carpets, especially for possible delamination, should be obtained from the manufacturer.

NOTE 3 This method is of particular value in installations which include borders, since it eliminates many of the problems involved in laying these combinations.

Where it is expected that a seam on the textile floor covering might produce a ridge, throwing the seam into prominence, the underlay should be chosen to allow bedding-in.

5.2 Fabricated underlays

Fabricated underlays conforming to BS EN 13986 should be selected from the following in the given end use conditions:

- a) Domestic:
 - i. loose lay where there is no risk of wetting;
 - medium density fibreboard Type MDF conforming to BS EN 622-5 with a minimum thickness of 3 mm;
 - plywood type [EN 636-1](#) with a minimum thickness of 3 mm;
 - Hardboard type HB with a minimum thickness of 3 mm;
 - ii. loose lay where there is a risk of wetting (e.g. kitchens or bathrooms);
 - plywood conforming to BS EN 636 and [Annex D](#) of this British Standard;
 - hardboard Type HB.H (oil tempered) conforming to BS EN 622-2 with a minimum thickness of 4.8 mm;
 - iii. fully bonded;
 - plywood conforming to BS EN 636 and [Annex D](#) of this British Standard;
 - hardboard Type HB.H (oil tempered) conforming to BS EN 622-2 with a minimum thickness of 4.8 mm.
- b) Non-domestic:
 - i. loose lay and fully bonded;
 - plywood conforming to BS EN 636 and [Annex D](#) of this British Standard;
 - hardboard Type HB.H (oil tempered) conforming to BS EN 622-2 with a minimum thickness of 4.8 mm.

NOTE Where floors are uneven, increasing the thickness of the fabricated underlay to lessen the effect is a consideration.

5.3 Interlays

Interlays should be of the following types:

- a) dry felt paper, manufactured as a thin, flexible sheet, approximately 0.5 mm to 1.0 mm thick;
- b) sheet manufactured from lightweight fused textile materials; sheet manufactured from spun bonded fibres; and
- c) release or delaminateable interlays.

Interlays should be used to help in the elimination of contamination from dust migrating through irregular or gapped floorboards. Interlays do not prevent the transfer of floor irregularities to the materials laid over them and they should not be used for this purpose.

5.4 In-situ underlays

COMMENTARY ON 5.4

In-situ underlays can be used over cementitious and similar bases. No single in-situ underlayment is the most suitable for all conditions, and selection depends on site conditions and occupational use.

5.4.1 General

In-situ underlays should be selected from the following:

- a) mastic asphalt classified as grade 1 in accordance with [BS 8204-5](#); and
- b) cementitious underlay consisting of a specially formulated blend of cement and binder and both fine and coarse aggregates.

NOTE The binder is commonly a synthetic polymer.

5.4.2 Mastic asphalt

Mastic asphalt should be laid in accordance with [BS 8204-5](#). Where it is being used as a combined underlay and damp-proof membrane, continuity with the damp-proof course in the walls should be provided.

5.4.3 Synthetic polymer dispersion/cement (aggregate filled)

NOTE The properties of these materials vary widely in respect of water and solvent resistance and resistance to point loading.

The material should be chosen in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

5.5 Underlayments

Underlayments should be selected from the following:

- a) cementitious underlayment consisting of a specially formulated blend of cement, binder and fine aggregate;

NOTE The binder is commonly a synthetic polymer dispersion.

- b) powder/water mixes based on cement or polymer and fine aggregate;
- c) epoxy or other resin compounds; and
- d) compatible underlayments that are available for direct contact with an anhydrite screed.

5.6 Textile floor coverings

NOTE 1 For details of the types of construction that are available, see BS ISO 2424 and BS EN 1307.

For assistance on the selection of textile floor coverings for various areas of use, reference should be made to BS EN 1307.

NOTE 2 Different types of floor coverings require specific methods of installation; see Table 1.

NOTE 3 Floor coverings of different specifications might become available during the life of this British Standard and separate standards could be issued to cover them. Unless the manufacturers of these products state to the contrary, the installation techniques described in this British Standard also apply for these materials.

5.7 Adhesives

5.7.1 General

The selection of adhesive should be considered at the design stage because it can influence performance during installation, in use or later during removal. The recommendations of the textile floor covering and adhesive manufacturer should be taken into account and followed precisely if they are specific to the type of adhesive to be used.

NOTE 1 Adhesives may be used to enable carpet and carpet tiles to be moved without damage, using a semi-permanent or tackifier adhesive, or for the permanent installation of the floor covering.

When the textile floor covering is being laid by a method involving total adhesion to the substrate alone, with a carpet underlay or in a strippable system, the adhesives used should be compatible with both the materials used in the system and the substrate.

NOTE 2 Fabric reinforced hot melt tapes can be used for joining or seaming certain types of carpet suitable for installation on grippers.

NOTE 3 None of the adhesives can be considered effective as a damp-proof membrane. The choice of adhesive is influenced by the floor covering material, the nature of the subfloor and the underlay, if any, site conditions during installation and service conditions.

The special recommendations of the floor covering and adhesive's manufacturer should be followed. If these recommendations differ, further consultation between the interested parties should take place.

5.7.2 Use of adhesive

NOTE 1 Recommendations on the suitability of laying various types of textile floor coverings using different systems of adhesion are given in Table 1.

A health and safety risk assessment and risk and method statement should be completed before using any adhesive. Any special requirements, such as ventilation, limited access or other appropriate action to protect either the installer or those individually involved, should be agreed with the main contractor before installation.

The adhesive manufacturer's instructions for the use of the adhesive should be followed, with particular emphasis on the application tool, e.g. notched trowel (including the correct size, shape and number of notches) or roller, the coverage rate and any follow-on process such as rolling.

NOTE 2 Specialized conductive adhesives are available for static sensitive areas.

5.8 Skirtings and covings

NOTE A variety of skirtings and covings can be used with the floor coverings covered by this British Standard.

Extruded sections are available in a number of different profiles and should be affixed to the wall using a suitable adhesive.

Such covings should be constant in radius, and care should be taken to ensure that they are straight and regular in order to minimize the formation of voids beneath the floor covering.

5.9 Transition strips

NOTE Transition strips are available in wood, metal and plastics.

Transition strips should be used between dissimilar types, thicknesses or colours of floor covering, at door openings or to act as a finish to a floor edge.

6 Subfloors (see also [Clause 5](#))

6.1 General

NOTE 1 The appearance and performance of the floor coverings covered by this British Standard are determined to a large extent by the quality of the prepared base or screed.

Those responsible for the design and construction of the subfloor should ensure that it has the necessary characteristics to allow the floor coverings to be installed successfully before the installer of the floor covering is asked to commence work. These characteristics should include:

- a) regularity of concrete floors, screeds and raised access floors;
- b) moisture content of concrete floors and screeds;
- c) integrity of screeds;
- d) cracks made good;
- e) construction joints treated;

NOTE 2 It is advisable to identify construction joints and treat accordingly, through the floor covering to the surface.

- f) gaps and changes of level;
- g) moisture content of wooden subfloors;
- h) no presence of asbestos in an existing floor covering; and
- i) the position and depth of cables, heating elements and water pipes (see [BS 8204](#), Parts 1, 5 and 7).

6.2 Damp proofing solid floors and eliminating construction moisture

6.2.1 Damp proofing solid floors

As the floor coverings included in this British Standard, together with many adhesives and smoothing compounds used with them, can be adversely affected by moisture, subfloors should be constructed so that they protect the floor covering installation from moisture or water vapour from the ground.

Solid floors should be damp proofed in accordance with [BS 8215](#). It should not be assumed that existing ground supported concrete floors are adequately damp proofed. Beam and block construction floors, whether finished with cement-sand screed or particleboard, should incorporate a vapour control layer.

Where existing structures do not incorporate adequate moisture protection, proprietary surface applied membranes or mastic asphalt should be used.

NOTE Integral water proofers incorporated in the concrete or screed do not provide adequate damp protection for floor coverings and retard the drying process.

6.2.2 Eliminating construction moisture

Before the floor covering installation is commenced, the floor should be constructed to prevent moisture transmission from the ground and so that any excess water used in the construction is dissipated.