

How To Avoid The Top 6 Floor Covering Sales Scams

This report describes the six most common scams and how they work. Knowledge is one of the best ways to spot flooring sales scams and avoid them before being cheated.

Another method to avoid flooring sales scams is to hire a reputable flooring company that won't risk their reputation with these schemes.

Scam #1: Over-Estimating

This is difficult to catch. The average customer has a difficult time accurately measuring and estimating the correct quantity of flooring needed.

This scam makes the dealer more money without adding any value to you.

Here's how it works. Let's say you're charged for 300 square feet (SF) of tile at \$5 per square feet (SF), that's \$1,500 total.

But what if you only need 250 SF, not 300 SF? The dealer charged you an extra 50 SF. At \$5 a SF, that's \$250. That's pure profit for the dealer. You paid for it but didn't need it.

Measuring and estimating the amount of floor covering needed isn't as simple as you might think. Here are a few things to consider:

What's The Width of the Roll Goods?

Roll goods, such as carpeting, are only manufactured in giant rolls (a carpet roll can weigh as much as 1,000 pounds). Carpet rolls come in standard widths. The most common is a 12-foot width. But you can also find rolls in 15-foot and 13.5-foot widths. Vinyl rolls on the other hand are manufactured in either 6-foot or 12-foot widths.

How Many Seams Are Needed?

The size of your room and how many seams you can tolerate will determine how much carpet or vinyl you need to buy. If you're lucky your room doesn't exceed the width of your roll. And the installer can easily "drop" in the material without any seaming necessary.

Many times, however, your room will exceed the standard width of the carpet or vinyl roll you purchase. In this case the material will need to be seamed and to properly seam the carpet or vinyl the installer will need a little extra material to work with.

A reputable retailer will review a Seam Diagram with you to insure you approve the layout. The Seam Diagram shows you where material will be used and about how much will be left over as normal waste. If they don't show you a Seam Diagram, ask to see one before you give the final go-ahead.

A good rule of thumb: the fewer seams you want, the higher quantity of rolled goods you'll need. Which of course will mean more leftover waste.

In What Direction are the Roll Goods Installed?

Roll goods must be installed in the same direction. They're not supposed to be quarter turned from room to room. The reason is because the fiber, design, or coloration of the carpet or sheet vinyl looks different at different angles.

If your floor covering runs north to south in the family room, it must run north to south in the adjacent den. Also note that turned material will make seams easily visible. The goal is to make seams look less noticeable.

Do Your Roll Goods Use Patterns?

If your material has a pattern you will most likely need extra to match up the patterns at the seams. If your room is a "drop" this won't be an issue.

Double-check your estimate

Once you get your estimate double check it and make sure it's accurate.

1) Measure each area from wall to wall. Make sure to go into the middle of any doorway. And remember to measure closets, halls, and stairs.

2) Add 3 inches to the length and width measurements

3) Multiply the length x width for each area to get SF. Use these numbers to convert inches to decimal format if you're using a calculator.

$$1'' = 0.08$$

$$2'' = 0.17$$

$$3'' = 0.25$$

$$4'' = 0.33$$

$$5'' = 0.42$$

$$6'' = 0.5$$

$$7'' = 0.58$$

$$8'' = 0.67$$

$$9'' = 0.75$$

$$10'' = 0.83$$

$$11'' = 0.92$$

$$12'' = 1$$

4) Add up the SF for each area to get the total job SF

5) Multiply the total SF by 1.1.

6) If your product has a pattern, multiply total SF by 1.2.

`This method will give you a rough idea of how much material you need. You should have a figure that's within a few percent of the retailer's estimate.

If your estimate is 5% higher or lower than the retailer's make sure that you didn't neglect any areas like closets, stairs, or hallways.

Note:

There are about 14 - 16 steps in a typical flight of stairs. And an enclosed stair will be about 3 feet in width. A flight of stairs like this would require approximately 108 SF of material. If the staircase has floating stairs you may need to double the material.

Scam # 2: Excess Material

In addition to selling you more SF than you actually need, another popular scam is to sell you more material than you need.

Excess Carpet Pad

In Scam #1 we discussed legitimate situations where you'd need extra carpet and can expect some waste. But carpet pad (the cushion installed underneath the carpet) has zero waste.

Since, it's installed underneath the carpet, no one will ever see it. This is how the scam works.

Let's say you purchase carpet with a pattern and need 900 SF of it. It's common to have 15% waste on this kind of project because you'll need extra carpet to match up the patterns at the seams.

However, if you're being charged the same 900 SF in carpet pad, you're being scammed. Why? You actually need about 15% less carpet pad! No one sees the pad and you don't need to match up any patterns.

Also, carpet pad rolls are usually warehoused and "broken" for each different job. Typically, the dealer doesn't have to order you a new roll, nor should she charge you for a new full roll.

However, if you special order a special pad, just for your project, you may have to buy the entire roll and possibly buy more than you need.

Excess Flooring Product Sold in Cartons

When you buy carton products like tile, stone, wood, vinyl tiles, or laminates, you purchase it by the full carton. Most dealers won't break open a carton and sell you one tile at a time.

It's hard to scam you on boxed flooring products because the quantity is clearly marked on each one.

However, it's a good idea to buy an extra carton and store it for future repairs. It could be very difficult, maybe impossible, to find the exact same product or color years later.

Double-check your estimate

Use the guidelines as under Scam #1 above.

SCAM #3: Selling Second Quality Material as First Quality

This scam is quite simple. You buy first quality flooring products, and instead of delivering what you paid for, they deliver the inferior second quality material instead.

Here's the difference between First and Second quality:

First quality goods pass the manufacture's inspections and quality control. The manufacturer looks for flaws, defects, color variances, etc. If it passes it's sold as first quality and retains all warranties.

If it doesn't pass, it's downgraded to second quality (or less), sold at a significant discount, and comes without warranties.

Seconds are available in limited quantities and are commonly purchased by retailers as stock items. If you buy stocked items from a retailer ask if they are first quality or not!

Also there is a very broad spectrum of defect among second quality flooring goods. Sometimes the dealer won't know what the defect is, but make sure to ask. The defects range from slight discoloration all the way to weak structural integrity at worst.

Unfortunately, some defects aren't noticeable until after installation. If you're thinking of buying seconds, do a visual inspection before you pay (you'll buy it as-is without warranties). So avoid buying second quality flooring products if you can.

SCAM #4: The Bait And Switch

Some products, like carpeting, are available in different levels of quality. For example, one carpet could be available in a Basic, Deluxe, or Premium version.

Each version may look the same but the face weight will be different. For instance...

Basic is a 30-ounce carpet

Deluxe is a 35-ounce carpet

Premium is a 42-ounce carpet

The scam happens when you pay for the higher quality Premium version but the dealer delivers the lower quality Deluxe version. He will unwrap and throw away all the packaging and shipping information that shows what was actually delivered.

Hardwood has a similar scam. One style of wood comes in two different finishes. One is more expensive because the finish is thicker and warranted to last longer. You buy and pay for the longer-lasting and more expensive wood finish but the dishonest retailer delivers the lower quality product.

Make sure your Sales Order lists the correct product name that you bought. Then inspect your material before it comes out of the original wrapping or box. Make sure everything matches.

Sometimes, on big projects, the retailer may unwrap material and products at a warehouse to have more room to pre-cut the products and make it faster to install on location. In this case, tell the dealer you want to keep all the product labels for your records.

SCAM #5: Playing With The Numbers

There are two variations to this scam. And the best solution to avoid both is to ask, "What's the total out-the-door price for the job?"

Here's how each one works:

The Lower-Price Number Scam

Retailer #1 writes a quote that lists out how much flooring you need and how much you can buy it from her: \$5 a SF.

$$800 \text{ SF} \times \$5 = \$4,000$$

Now you shop it at Retailer #2. She says she can sell you the exact same flooring for only \$4.79 a SF. Sounds good?

Not so fast! Retailer #2 is pulling the scam. She'll tell you Retailer #1's measurements were wrong and you actually need 835 SF.

$$835 \text{ SF} \times \$4.79 = \$4,000$$

Did you get that? Retailer #2 lowered the price to pull you in but "over-estimated" and sold you more SF than you actually need.

The Higher-Price Number Scam

This works in reverse from the Lower-Price Number scam above. This time Retailer #1 is pulling the scam. He knows you need 600 SF of flooring for your job. The flooring you have your heart set on costs \$6 a SF, or \$3,600 total.

He knows you're going to shop his competition so he increases the quantity needed and decreases the product price to get the same total sale of \$3,600.

$$\$5.54 \text{ SF} \times 650 = \$3,600$$

What he wants to happen is this. If you ask Retailer #2 and #3 to sell you the same flooring for less than \$5.54 a SF, they'll tell you they can't sell it for that cheap. And then you'll return to Retailer #1 and buy it from him. But he "increased the amount" you actually need.

SCAM #6: Touchy-Feely

Some salespeople may try to sell you an overpriced product if it "feels" luxurious. The salesperson will get you to buy with your emotions.

This is how the scam works with carpeting. The salesperson will show you a thick product and have you run your fingers into it and feel it's richness.

However, feeling isn't how you should buy carpeting or any other flooring product. What the salesperson fails to mention is that the thick piece of carpeting (that feels rich and luxurious) is made from a cheap material, like olefin. It won't hold up in a high traffic area and will flatten out within six months.

The salesperson may also not tell you that the fiber is a staple and it will shed and fuzz (making a mess of your clothes, floors, and even ruin your vacuum cleaner).

When you buy flooring you want to know how it'll perform for your needs. A reputable company will take the time to explain and educate you on the differences. Plus, it won't risk its reputation on any of these common floor covering scams.

About the Author

Carpet Wagon is a regional leader in floor covering. They help clients make the right flooring decisions for their home or business, professionally install flooring, and conveniently service warranties and claims for clients.

Carpet Wagon has successfully worked with 33,000 clients over the past 20 years and installed more than One Million Square Feet of flooring products. They employ friendly and professional customer service staff, flooring design consultants, and certified installers.

Their work is backed by their "Absolutely No-Regrets, Iron-Clad Guarantees" plus by the brand name manufactures' warranties.

Call toll-free **1-877-519-2466** to schedule a flooring design consultation at their showroom or your home. There's no cost and no obligation.