



The Ultimate Guide to Selecting Your Deck



Decking Perth®



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Introduction

Choosing the right decking is important as it forms the foundation (literally) for your outdoor living and entertainment area.

It should be well designed, look great, be large enough to accommodate your family and friends and ideally not take much effort to maintain.

The most difficult decision of selecting a deck that fits your needs and suits your house is the material to use.

Start your research here with our guide which also explores consideration factors such as Appearance, care & cleaning, durability, and cost.



Considerations before you start

Do you need permission to build?

Make sure that there are no restrictions on using your backyard area for a deck, especially if it is raised.

You may need to get planning and building approval as well as taking into consideration privacy laws. Each council will have their own set of regulations in WA which you will need to handle yourself if you're not using a contractor.

Do you have limited space?

Decks do not always have to be rectangular. If you have awkward spaces make the most of it with curves or angles in the edge of the deck.

Are you going to want outdoor electronics?

Before you dive into construction think about the everyday use of the deck and whether you'll need to run electrics from certain points for lights, speakers or otherwise.

Will your deck have full sun or some shade?

Choose a material that will be able to withstand the conditions you put in. The amount of sun, shade and other material on the deck will determine how long it holds its look.

Does the deck border a pool?

The drawback of some materials is that they can become slippery when wet. Find out which decking material is best suited next to a pool.

A pool also means bare feet, ensure the material you choose is kind underfoot.



Evolution of Decking

Decks have been around for centuries, for a large part of that there were limited choices of materials and homeowners would decide from a few options.

Timber from plantations are engineered to grow quickly and do not share the same properties of hardwoods which brought about the creation of man-made composite decking.

In the 90s, composite decking came onto the market attracting a lot of interest. This first generation of composite decking was not perfect and had drawbacks, such as fading, staining and scratching.

In the early 2000's some companies decided to remove the wood out of the composite which became second generation, also known as plastic or PVC decking. This did fix the scratching issue, but it still faded and stained easily.

The third generation of composite decking from brands like MoistureShield took steps to decrease deforestation during manufacture while increasing overall performance with capping to provide resistance to fading, staining, scratching and mould.

Hardwoods have remained popular for homeowners due to their beauty and simplicity.





Choosing the right material

Here we have the general pros and cons of several materials followed by a more detailed breakdown of the important decision-making factors such as appearance, maintenance, durability, and cost.

Composite decking

Composite decking is a timber alternative that combines plastic and wood chips in an environmentally friendly board. It has quickly become a favourite for residential use in over the past quarter of a century.

If near-zero maintenance is your goal composite decking is an excellent choice, and because of the consistency of the material, you can use every meter bought.

The look isn't 100% natural, but if you'd rather enjoy your deck than work on it, composite decking is for you.

Pros

- Consistent grain, colour, dimension
- Regular board length
- No rotting boards to replace
- Not attacked by insects
- Save time on installation & finishing
- Bushfire resistant up to BAL 40
- Weather resistant
- Stain resistant
- Minimal maintenance
- No wood splits, cupping, splinters
- Easy to work with
- Anti-slip properties
- Residential Warranty periods

Cons

- May look fake or cheap
- Some brands can be slippery
- Cannot be repainted
- Costs range higher than timber



Timber decking

Wood is the original, and natural material that has been used for decking, if you're priority is the natural feel and look, go with timber.

Timber continues to be a popular choice for many homeowners, check that the Australian Forest Stewardship Council certifies your suppliers/installers so that you aren't contributing to illegal logging and deforestation.

When treated properly, timber can be rot-resistant, stainable, and most timber in use is now hard enough to resist daily foot traffic with some installers carrying warranties.

Pros

- ✓ It's authentic; has a natural warmth
- ✓ Smells good
- ✓ Looks natural
- ✓ Can be the most inexpensive decking
- ✓ When treated repels bugs
- ✓ Lasts years if protected & maintained
- ✓ Strong, easy material to work with

Cons

- ✓ Hardwoods can be expensive
- ✓ Can split, crack and change colour
- ✓ Availability and price vary by region
- ✓ Labour & cost involved to maintain
- ✓ High grade timbers can be expensive
- ✓ Shrinking, swelling, & degrading
- ✓ Requires periodic staining/sealing
- ✓ Maintenance costs time and money



PVC decking

This material is available in a range of surface textures and colours to suit your taste when imported.

It is one of the most expensive decking materials and requires minimal effort to install.

It struggles under prolonged sun exposure as a generation 2 composite, becoming brittle and more likely to crack and replacing one section may mean replacing the entire deck for colour-matching.

Pros

- Flexibility in design options
- Easy to install
- Semi-Durable
- Low maintenance

Cons

- Costly replacement
- Susceptible to sun damage
- Little slip resistance
- Railing likely to flex over time





Aluminium decking

There are lots of reasons why aluminium is a suitable decking material, primarily it's extremely weather resistant, and requires little or no maintenance.

Aluminium decking can be interlocked to prevent rain from dripping through. For a seriously low-maintenance deck, look to aluminium.



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Pros

- Tough and strong
- Slip resistant
- Small range of varied colours
- Won't rot, splinter or warp
- Fireproof
- Recyclable
- Minimal maintenance
- Maintains look & colour

Cons

- Most expensive decking
- Does not resemble wood
- Cost range tends to be highest
- Tends to look commercial
- Least heat resistant
- Limited stock



Appearance

Remember, the deck is part of the rest of the house, especially the exterior so pick a style that looks cohesive with everything else.

Hardwoods can enhance any outdoor space. A high-quality timber can look gorgeous, and with the proper investment, it's likely to maintain its texture, and colour for much of its lifetime.

When choosing timber boards avoid severe warps and twisted boards, which cannot be repaired.

Today's capped composite decking captures all the warmth and beauty of natural wood--from the textures and colours right down to the grain patterns.

Composite decking comes in various timber looks to suit your outdoor space and brands such as MoistureShield are backed by a 50-year Structural Warranty and up to 50-year Fade and Stain Warranty.

You really won't mistake aluminium for timber, but the durable material with powder coating will hold its colour relatively well before fading.

PVC Manufacturers have made many attempts to replicate wood, but it still has its problems with texture and feel despite a broad colour spectrum.

Remember; unifying your furniture around one bold colour makes your deck look consistent and doesn't distract from the view, especially if you have a lot of landscaping or gardening in the backyard.



Durability

A deck and its supporting structure are going to be exposed to the weather. It is essential that a suitable type of material is chosen for the decking boards and the supporting structure.

Composite decking boards are manufactured with a high-performance shell that wraps around the exposed top and sides of the composite board to protect it from the elements, providing resistance to fading, staining, scratching and mould. The best brands, such as MoistureShield, offer up to 50-years on their Fade and Stain Warranty to give you complete peace of mind.

When any timber (treated or untreated) is exposed to the weather,

the timber will take up and lose moisture from or to the atmosphere causing it to expand or contract.

The application of a protective coating to the timber surface will minimise the effects of weathering of any timber (treated or untreated) in an exposed situation.

Aluminium decking can withstand extreme heat and cold; it also has very low expansion and contraction characteristics making it one of the most durable material choices for decking.

PVC has a long life due to its make-up; its plastic base makes it scratch, moisture, insect and rot resistant. It doesn't last well under prolonged UV exposure such as the Australian sun which will cause it to change colour.





Heat resistance

Particularly applicable to the West Australian climate, the rate at which your deck soaks up heat from the sun will define how long you can walk on it barefoot or otherwise enjoy your deck.

How much heat your decking holds will be affected by the colour, material and brand you choose? As a rule of thumb, dark coloured materials/finishes hold more heat than lighter ones.



In extensive studies, it has been found that the colour of the decking board, regardless if it's made of wood-plastic composite or wood is the most significant factor in the "heat retention" of the board.

Different products achieve different results so be sure to ask your supplier how the material performs with heat. If you live in a bushfire prone location, consider the durability of aluminium and MoistureShield decking which has a class C fire rating - the same class rating as wood.

In hot, consistently sun-exposed areas and aluminium decks can get very hot underfoot, making them uncomfortable.



Installation

Composite decks are installed using clips, deck screws, or hidden fasteners for a seamless look.

Installation of decking is less complicated when the boards have consistent, long lengths. MoistureShield offers many sizes and lengths of boards so you can build a deck with fewer but it can be installed faster than timber due to easy-to-install grooves and fasteners – which reduces the cost of labour.

Hardwoods create a great effect when finished, however, because this timber is so dense, it's difficult to cut and drill.

When compared with timber, aluminium decking is three to four times lighter, yet two to three times stronger. It can be cut with the same saws and carbide-tipped blades used to cut wood.

PVC decking uses a similar fastener system to composite decking. However, it is risky to invest in PVC boards with due to its inherent qualities.





Cost

Short Term

The median of pricing options is timber due to the initial cost savings, a variety of grades and availability of raw material. A higher grade of timber will be reflected in its price.

Composite materials are usually more expensive because most of the raw materials used in making products like MoistureShield are recycled. These materials are carefully processed to ensure the highest level of quality and performance.

TMoistureShield offers the only composite decking with 360-degree protection, even when installed in water. Its durability makes it a good long-term investment. Aluminium decking is typically about twice as expensive as traditional wood and composite decking.

PVC decking was a stop-gap product in the transition time between uncapped (1st generation) and capped (3rd generation) composites that never really hit the mark. Most quality decking brands have discontinued their sales of this type of decking.



Long Term

Considering the long-term cost of decking materials is important.

Maintenance of timber can add up over the lifetime of a deck. And, if part of the deck needs to be replaced due to warping or rot, the total cost of the deck is significantly increased.

Therefore, composite decking is often cheaper overall – even though it may initially cost 2-3 times more per board.

The boards' durability and resistance to the toughest Australian weather conditions can save you considerable time and money over the life of your deck.

Decking materials vary in price, if you don't mind the maintenance that comes with wood decks, then you'll save money on the front end.

But remember, you'll need to spend a fair bit every couple of years on washing, staining, and scrubbing the deck to keep it in good condition too.

Composite decking can save you significantly over time, but the upfront cost of buying decking materials can be substantial.

The long-term costs of decking mostly tie-in to maintenance and replacement/loss of quality due to fading, staining and scratching such as PVC decking.

The cost of buying maintenance products, such as decking stain and oils can be substantial.



Care and maintenance levels

It's important to know how much time you'll need to spend cleaning, staining, and restoring the deck to keep it looking its best.

Composite decking is a lot like pre-finished flooring. It arrives as a finished product and NEVER needs sanding, staining, or painting.

However, they aren't maintenance-free.

With some brands, mould and mildew can grow in shady, damp areas of the deck. This is easily taken care of with an occasional soap and water clean.

Aluminium decks can be affected by airborne salts along with dirt over time causing corrosion.

A clean with water and a mild household detergent and use a soft brush, or a damp cloth is recommended.

A mild cutting compound can be used very carefully to restore the surface of darker marks.

Ensure surface is thoroughly rinsed afterwards to remove compound.

Timber requires the most maintenance over any other deck material.

Regular cleanings are necessary, and wood decks must be treated and re-sealed every three to six months.

Without regular maintenance, timber decks can split, crack or rot in the harsh Aussie climate.

So be sure to apply a timber finish or oil to your deck regularly to ensure its good looks last.

PVC isn't supposed to require staining, paint, or the application of any treatments, simply hose down the deck, and allow it to dry.



Questions to ask your supplier/installer



What grade?

Timber has different grades of materials and composite is into its 3rd generation. Ask your supplier/installer what they carry.



How long have you been in business in this area?

Experience is necessary, ask how long their product has been around and how long they have been dealing with it.

Can they produce all the documentation proving it has been tested in Australia and conforms to the relevant Australian Standards?



Do you offer a warranty?

What sort of warranty do they offer on your choice of material?



Can you provide us with references and examples of your previous work?

Ask for samples, a photo gallery, or a showroom display you can visit to see how it look in real life.



Will you give us a more than one quote?

There are cheaper installers who will be cutting corners out there and often there is no way of knowing you have a reasonable quote unless you have more than one.

Decking Perth offers three quotes from our exclusive list of hand-picked Deck Pros.



How long will the project take to complete?

Gauge the availability and timeline of the expected work to ensure you get excellent service.



Our recommended decking material

If you're still not sure which decking material to choose, we recommend MoistureShield composite.

It provides everything you need from a decking material - an attractive appearance, durability, minimal maintenance, and strong resistance to the Australian environment.

We hope that the Ultimate Guide to Decking will help you will discover the best decking material for your project.

Learn about the best decking material choices, which materials are best suited for your project, and determine the best value decking material.

At Decking Perth, we have a hand-picked selection of highly skilled, professional contractors and Deck Pro's to help bring your dream deck into a reality for you.

Offering three quotes from decking professionals to tailor a deck to suit your needs.



If you'd like more advice about choosing a decking material, or want to find out more about any of the elements in this report, contact us today via phone 08 9240 7345 or email decks@deckingperth.com.au.

