

WHICH DECK GUIDE

Part 1 of 3: What to Consider

#1 Deck or Paved Patio?

Besides the comfort that a deck offers, one of the most popular uses of a deck is on the patio adjoining the property and there are two reasons for this. 1. The floor of the interior extends to the exterior when matching or complimentary materials are used, especially with the increasingly popular bi-fold doors, giving the illusion of vast neat space. 2. If the property sits on a downward slope, or if the ground is uneven, a deck solves the problem easily because it is built on a supporting joist structure. The next popular installation is of course where the sun shines and you want to sit there!

#2 Deck Design & Installation

A simple rectangular deck can be a DIY project. All that is needed is levelling the ground, building the joist structure and putting the decking boards down. With Fiberon hidden fasteners, the expansion gaps are allowed for and the result is a superior finish. Most composite products will be installed in much the same way as a timber deck and can be installed by someone with good DIY skills, but if you are uncertain, you should seek professional help as it is a big investment and errors can be costly.

A more complicated deck which involves curves or steps or patterns is probably better left to the professionals. If you choose to use a contractor to install your deck, make sure your installer is well experienced and fully competent with the product you wish to use.

#3 Whatever the weather

Unfortunately we can't rely on the British weather to deliver the perfect conditions all year round, but what you should be able to rely on is your decking! Wood isn't able to handle all the changes in the weather without the help of litres of treatment oil and hours spent painting it (maintenance) and leaving to dry which means your deck will be out of bounds on dry, sunny days. It normally requires 2 coatings.

Products can assist your wood decking, but it may still be liable to twist and splinter after a few years of use. Even if there is no damage, yearly maintenance is needed to keep the deck looking good so that you can enjoy it, and a worn timber deck looks grubby and is susceptible to mould growth. These concerns can be resolved entirely by using a composite product rather than wood. Composite decking is made up of a mixture of wood and plastic fibres which allow it to withstand the weather and the test of time. Fiberon's coated range even has stain and fade resistance guaranteed for 20 years. The next major concern is slipping. When a timber deck gets wet from the rain or snow, it can easily turn into a dangerous slippery surface. Fiberon composite decking is tested and proven to have safe slip resistance according to UK & German standards.

#4 Balustrades

The same rules apply to the materials of the decking; wooden rails can look worn and become rotten and splintered if they are not maintained. It is possible to also use composite products for your balustrades, yet if you want to achieve a more bespoke look you can always opt for metal or PVC rail.

#5 Materials

The composition of recycled plastic and wood but is highly engineered to yield a whole new, tough and appealing product to give better fit for purpose. Although wood is able to give you a unique grain that composites can only try to imitate, it should be noted that advanced composites are capable of matching the look of wood grain. Furthermore, because they are replications, they come without the imperfections of knots and splits that natural wood will have. With the added advantages of colour choice and a British Standard safe nonslip surface to boot, it is hard to deny that the composite materials have superior elements.

#6 Care and maintenance

If, like many, you prefer the thought of not having to spend hours on your hands and knees applying several coats of lacquer to protect your wooden decking, then composite might be the option for you. With very little cleaning required, you can spend much more time enjoying your deck than painting it with coat after coat of expensive varnishes.

#7 Life expectancy

Using composite materials can give you a contemporary deck that will last (guaranteed up to 25 years) and continue to look its very best for many years, with coated products guaranteed against stain and fade also for up to 25 years. Not only can you truly relax and enjoy your deck, should you decide to move on, your deck will be a great asset to your home and its overall value.

#8 Safety

Without significant maintenance, when a timber deck is wet, it turns into a dangerous slippery surface. Other than it being out of bounds when it rains or snows, would you be installing a hot tub or is the deck surrounding a swimming pool? If so, consider the non-usability of the deck when it gets wet. Composite decking is tested and proven to have safe slip resistance and is perfect for use in wet environment.

As composite materials do not split and splinter, it is perfectly safe to walk on a composite deck in bare feet and safe for placing or moving objects like inflatables eg rubber tub.

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Tel: 0116 2887719 Email: sales@fiberondecking.co.uk

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Part 2 of 3: What material to go for

#1 Timber

The two main issues with timber deck are maintenance and slip resistance. It is not just the time, effort and cost that are required every 1 or 2 years, but the downtime of the deck during hot, sunny days. First, you would need a hot or dry day to paint or stain the timber with treatment oil, then you need at least another whole day for it to dry and that is just for one coat. Timber deck gets algae growth after a while and it is this layer of algae that makes the surface dangerously slippery especially when it is wet after a downpour or worse, ice during the wintry season.

#2 Hollow Composite Board

This is the first generation of composite decking and is cheaper to manufacture due to its hollow core but it presents problems such as logging of water and pests within the boards which happens when the edging board covering the edge of the deck drops off. Hollow boards may also present other problems especially breaking and warping as they just are not strong enough. Remember the hollow board means you cannot work with it like with solid wood.

#3 Solid Composite Board - Uncapped

Manufacturers who knew the problems with hollow boards introduced solid core boards (Fiberon has never made hollow boards). The second generation solid composite boards perform much better but they had issue of staining and slight fading over time. Algae can also grow on the boards, therefore requiring regular cleaning which can be effortlessly cleaned with jet wash. Note that the algae growth can make the deck slippery too.

#4 Solid Composite Board - Capped

Putting a tough membrane or cap round the board protects it and gets rid of the stain and fade problem such that manufacturers are able to offer long warranties from 15 years upwards. Fiberon's highest end capped boards for instance, comes with 25 years performance warranty which includes stain and fade, for residential installation. The most expensive range of composites has the membrane wrapped all round, that is on all four sides. To offer a lower cost capped board, manufacturers like Fiberon makes other ranges with cap on three sides only, leaving the underside uncapped and grooved. Cost can be brought down even further by making thinner boards capped on 3 sides.

With this latest development, the look of indoor flooring can be closely achieved outdoor. Why is this advantageous? Well if you have bi-fold doors and matching floor out on the patio, when the doors are open, it gives the impression of a vast clean indoor/outdoor space. This concept is becoming increasingly popular and that is why there is a wider range of colours offered in this highest end of fully capped boards, or at least from Fiberon.

In time to come, non-capped composite boards may be phased out totally. Fiberon is certainly planning to do this as it aims to supply only the very best of decking material.

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Part 3 of 3: Which Fiberon board?

If you have decided you want a safe, low maintenance deck, and you want to use solid composite boards, Fiberon has different ranges to suit your style preference and budget. Below is a table to compare the important or major differences.

Feature	<i>Horizon</i>	<i>ProTect</i>	<i>Sanctuary</i>	<i>Good Life</i>	<i>Terranova Xtreme</i>	<i>Professional</i>
Colours	5	4	3	3	2	2
Skin/Cap all round	•					
Skin/Cap on 3 sides		•	•	•	•	
No Skin/Cap						•
24mm thickness	•	•	•	•		
20mm thickness					•	•
Same appearance on both sides	•					
Groove on under side		•	•	•	•	•
Better slip resistance than timber	•	•	•	•	•	
Tested good slip resistance						•
Residential Limited Warranty	25 yrs	25 yrs	25 yrs	25 yrs	20 yrs	15 yrs
Commercial Limited Warranty	10 yrs	10 yrs	10 yrs	10 yrs	10 yrs	10 yrs
Warranty against stain & fade	25 yrs	25 yrs	25 yrs	25 yrs	20 yrs	

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