

FAQ about floor approval for table tennis

Why does the ITTF not (yet) approve permanent sport floors? Why ITTF only defines requirements for temporary floor mats?

The ITTF does not approve nor authorize permanent floors because of **practicability**. The ITTF would need to build up a testing network all over the globe. In most countries or regions there will only be one or some hall specially designed for table tennis by the community or city council: in these venues there may be a specific table tennis floor, responding to ITTF standards. The ITTF will not be able to organize such tests “in situ”.

The good presentation of the matches requires a uniform playing surface: no lines, suitable colour, low gloss... The floors shall offer good sporting properties protecting the players' health... The ITTF Technical Leaflet T6 describes the desirable features of a table tennis floor.

All the temporary mats presently approved by the ITTF only are acceptable on a real sports floor, not on concrete, on tiles or on wood without a springy underlayer. Our lab tests the floor mats over styropor/styrodur (1-2cm) covered by agglomerate (1.9 cm). Comments are welcome.

Which criteria may be observed to make a sport floor suitable for table tennis?

The criteria and requirements are properly developed in our **Technical Leaflet T6**; they are valid for any sports floor used in table tennis, permanent or temporary. Some additional comments or reflections may be useful.

For table tennis a **wooden sports floor with a suitable surface** is very good, if there are no disturbing lines, if the gloss is low and if the colour is so dark that the ball remains perfectly visible for players, spectators and TV-viewers.

- A wooden surface is most suitable because table tennis players move their feet in a “permanent” way, by small translational and rotational movements or “quicksteps”, requiring easy and safe starts and stops, but avoiding blockage or strong obstruction, that would cause harm to joints, muscles and ligaments.

Any other **real synthetic sport floor** is fine if the following additional conditions are observed:

- The energy restitution may not be too high, otherwise the players feet are projected upwards too strongly and quickly, and at the moment when the player wants to start, his feet are no more (well enough) in contact with the floor. He slips away. This has nothing to do with the measured static frictional properties.
- The energy restitution may not be too low i.e. the floor may not be so soft that the feet are still indenting the floor or staying in a depression when the player wishes to start again. In such a situation he would need a lot more energy for taking his next step, he may be late and he gets more tired. His muscles, ligaments and joints are under high stress.
- The rotation of the feet, wearing normal rubber or polyurethane soles, may not be blocked.
- The haze gloss should be as low as possible.

If a **permanent floor** observes the ITTF criteria, it should be fit for table tennis. The suppliers may initiate themselves a test, and a certificate from a laboratory that is accredited for testing sport floors should be made available. It may say that the floor features are according to the ITTF requirements ... The ITTF may get a copy including the data measured, but may not set up a special approval or authorization procedure. Comments are welcome.