Standard vs Acoustic vs Fire vs Moisture-Resistant vs Impact/Heavy-Duty vs Thermal/Insulated vs Specialist Boards

Plasterboard gets treated like a basic commodity far more often than it should. In reality, there are several different board types, and the right one depends on where it is being used, what performance it needs to deliver, and what problem you are actually trying to solve. A standard board in the wrong location can still be the wrong board, even if it was cheap and easy to get hold of.

British Gypsum, Knauf and Siniat all position plasterboard as a performance-led category covering fire, acoustic, moisture, impact and thermal requirements rather than just "a sheet for the wall." For most domestic and light commercial projects, the key comparison usually comes down to **standard plasterboard**, **acoustic plasterboard**, **fire-resistant plasterboard**, **moisture-resistant plasterboard**, **impact-resistant or heavy-duty plasterboard**, **thermal or insulated plasterboard**, and a few **specialist boards** such as vapour-control, external-grade, shaftwall, X-ray and structural steel fire-protection products. British Gypsum's selector guide and Knauf's range guide both show that the category is much broader than the standard, fire and moisture trio most people default to.

What the board types are generally used for?

Standard plasterboard is the general all-rounder for ordinary internal walls and ceilings in dry areas. It is the default lining board where there is no special performance demand beyond normal internal use. Knauf identifies this as its standard gypsum board category, and British Gypsum's core range positions standard boards as the base product for everyday drylining.

Acoustic plasterboard is generally used in separating walls, bedrooms, home offices, media rooms and any other location where reducing airborne sound transmission matters more than a basic lining board can deliver. British Gypsum's SoundBloc range is specifically positioned around improved acoustic performance, and Siniat also separates acoustic plasterboard as its own product category.

Fire-resistant plasterboard is generally used where the wall or ceiling build-up needs enhanced fire performance, such as garage ceilings below habitable rooms, protected routes, service risers, partitions and steel encasement details. British Gypsum says Gyproc FireLine is a Type F plasterboard to BS EN 520 and states it is used in partitions, ceilings and steel encasement systems where fire performance is required.

Moisture-resistant plasterboard is generally used in kitchens, bathrooms, utility rooms and other humid areas where a standard board is more vulnerable to moisture-related deterioration. Siniat states that its moisture board includes water-resistant additives in the core and liner and is intended for humid areas such as kitchens, bathrooms and utility rooms.

Impact-resistant or heavy-duty plasterboard is generally used in busier, harder-working areas such as hallways, schools, healthcare spaces, commercial fit-outs and homes where extra fixing strength or robustness is needed. British Gypsum's Habito is promoted as a strong plasterboard with superior

fixing strength and robustness, while Knauf and Siniat both list impact-resistant board families in their ranges.

Thermal or insulated plasterboard is generally used where the lining also needs to improve thermal performance, usually by bonding plasterboard to an insulation layer. These products are common in refurbishments, internal wall upgrades and areas where adding insulation externally is not practical. British Gypsum's selector guide includes thermal-performance boards as a distinct category, and insulated plasterboard is a standard feature of UK drylining systems.

Specialist boards cover a wider group including **vapour-control boards**, **external boards**, **X-ray shielding boards**, and **fire-protection boards for steelwork**. Knauf's range guide explicitly lists vapour barrier and radiation-protection boards, while British Gypsum includes specialist products such as Glasroc F FireCase for passive fire protection to structural steel.

Why each one is used?

Standard plasterboard is used because it is the simplest and most cost-effective option where no added performance is needed. If the area is dry, low-risk and not acoustically or fire sensitive, standard board is often perfectly adequate. That is why it remains the default board on so many internal partitions and ceilings.

Acoustic plasterboard is used because it helps improve sound insulation, especially when combined with the right framing, insulation and sealing. British Gypsum explicitly markets SoundBloc as helping make spaces quieter while also improving fire resistance, which makes it useful where standard board alone would be underpowered.

Fire board is used because some parts of a building need demonstrable fire resistance, not just a lining that happens to be gypsum-based. Gyproc FireLine is marketed specifically for areas needing fire performance in partitions, ceilings and encasements, which is why it is standard practice in many protected or separating details.

Moisture-resistant board is used because humid environments are hard on standard plasterboard over time. Siniat's moisture board is specifically designed to resist moisture damage in humid areas, and that is exactly why it is commonly specified behind tiled finishes and in service areas.

Impact-resistant board is used because some walls take more abuse than others. British Gypsum positions Habito around superior fixing strength and robustness, while Knauf and Siniat classify impact boards as a separate performance category. In simple terms, some walls need more than politeness and a decent skim coat.

Thermal/insulated plasterboard is used because it lets you line and insulate in one build-up. That can be extremely useful on refurbishment projects where space is limited and upgrading the wall thermally from the inside is the most realistic route.

Ease of use

Standard plasterboard is usually the easiest and most familiar board to work with. It is widely available, straightforward to cut and fix, and does not usually carry the cost or weight premium of

higher-performance variants. Siniat's standard board guidance and the mainstream UK range structure both support that role.

Acoustic and fire boards are still easy enough to use in normal drylining terms, but they tend to be denser or more performance-specific, so they often feel a bit more substantial and need closer attention to system details. The board alone does not create the rating. The full wall or ceiling system does that. British Gypsum's White Book and selector material make that pretty clear.

Moisture-resistant boards are not especially difficult to install, but they are only useful when paired with the correct overall detailing for wet or humid areas. They are not a magic shield against bad design, bad sealing or poor substrate prep. Siniat's moisture guidance frames them as performance boards for humid areas, not as universal waterproofing products.

Impact boards and strong boards such as Habito bring practical benefits, but they are usually chosen for performance rather than pure ease. You are normally paying for extra robustness, higher fixing capability or improved security, not because the board is somehow more fun on a cutting table.

Insulated plasterboards can simplify a build-up by combining lining and insulation, but they also need more thought around thickness, junctions, fixings and vapour control. The board may save steps overall, but it asks for a bit more brains at the detailing stage. That is the normal trade-off with multi-function products.

Technical characteristics that matter

One of the key technical references for plasterboard is **BS EN 520**, which classifies boards by performance type. Knauf's range guide lists examples including **Type A** for standard gypsum board, **Type F** for improved core adhesion at high temperatures for fire resistance, **Type H** for reduced water absorption, **Type I** for enhanced surface hardness, and **Type R** for enhanced strength. That classification matters because it helps explain what the board is actually designed to do, beyond the colour of the paper face.

For **fire performance**, Gyproc FireLine is explicitly listed by British Gypsum as a **Type F** plasterboard to BS EN 520. British Gypsum also states that it is used where fire performance is needed in domestic separating walls, corridors, garages and steel encasements. That makes fire board a very specific specification tool rather than just "pink board for important bits."

For **acoustic performance**, British Gypsum markets SoundBloc as an acoustic board that also improves fire resistance, while Siniat and Knauf both maintain dedicated acoustic board categories. The main point here is that acoustic performance comes from the whole system, but denser sound-reducing boards are a key part of that system.

For **moisture performance**, Siniat states that its moisture board contains water-resistant additives in both the core and liner. That is what distinguishes it from standard board and explains why it is specified in kitchens, bathrooms and utility rooms rather than being treated as just another decorative lining.

For **robustness and fixing strength**, Gyproc Habito is one of the more notable current UK examples. British Gypsum describes it as having superior fixing strength, toughness and durability, and notes it

is part of Secured by Design accredited systems in some applications. That makes this type of board especially relevant where people want stronger direct fixings and tougher walls.

Approximate costs of the product

At a broad planning level, **standard plasterboard** is usually the cheapest option, **moisture and fire boards** tend to cost more, **acoustic boards** usually sit above standard board because of their denser performance-driven makeup, and **impact-resistant or insulated boards** often sit higher again.

Knauf's current UK download centre includes a 2026 gypsum price list, which supports the point that board pricing varies materially by performance category even within one manufacturer's range. In practical terms, the board cost should not be looked at in isolation. A more expensive board can still be the better-value option if it avoids adding extra layers, improves the wall specification, or better suits the room. Cheap board in the wrong location is not value. It is just an inexpensive route to doing the job twice. That conclusion is an inference based on how manufacturers structure these product families and system solutions.

How they tend to be sold and availability

Standard, fire, moisture and acoustic boards are widely available through UK builders' merchants, drywall specialists and decorators' merchants. British Gypsum, Knauf and Siniat all maintain broad UK distribution networks and technical documentation to support these product categories.

Impact, insulated and other specialist boards are also available, but they are more likely to be bought as part of a defined system or specification rather than as a casual branch-counter substitution. Knauf's high-performance board range and British Gypsum's selector guide both show these boards as specialist solutions rather than commodity defaults.

Some of the more specialist boards — such as **vapour-control**, **X-ray**, **external** and **steel fire-protection boards** — are typically sourced through more specialist drywall or project-led channels rather than being treated as everyday merchant stock. That is consistent with the way manufacturers present and document these products.

Other points a customer should know before choosing

If the area is a **standard dry room**, **standard plasterboard** is often enough. There is no need to over-specify every wall just because a stronger board exists somewhere on the internet.

If the area is a **bathroom, kitchen or utility**, **moisture-resistant plasterboard** usually deserves proper consideration, especially behind tiled finishes and in humid zones. That is exactly what Siniat and the wider UK plasterboard market position it for.

If the wall needs **better sound reduction**, **acoustic board** should be looked at, but as part of a full acoustic build-up, not as a lone silver bullet. Board choice, stud depth, insulation and sealing all matter. British Gypsum's White Book and product guidance support that system-led view.

If the area needs **fire resistance**, use a **fire-rated board and a tested system**, not guesswork and hope. Fire performance is a system issue, not a colour-chart decision.

If the wall is likely to take **knocks, fixings or heavy use**, strong or **impact-resistant board** such as Habito-type products can make real sense. In the right setting, they are not overkill — they are just less annoying later.

Conclusion

If you want the blunt version: **standard plasterboard** is the everyday all-rounder; **acoustic board** is for quieter rooms and better sound separation; **fire board** is for fire-rated walls, ceilings and protected areas; **moisture-resistant board** is for kitchens, bathrooms and humid rooms; **impact or heavy-duty board** is for tougher spaces and stronger fixings; **thermal/insulated board** is for lining plus insulation in one build-up; and **specialist boards** cover niche requirements such as vapour control, external use, radiation shielding and structural fire protection.

There is no universal winner because the right plasterboard depends entirely on what the wall or ceiling needs to do. For simple drylining in low-risk dry areas, standard board is fine. For bathrooms, moisture board makes more sense. For sound control, acoustic board moves up the list. For protected routes or garage ceilings, fire board matters. And where the wall needs to be stronger, more durable or easier to fix into, impact boards earn their place. The smart move is not just buying plasterboard. It is buying the right board for the job.