Real metal, laminate and *metal-effect* finishes compared

Seven ways to get a metal face compared in plain terms, with the fire-class table for wall linings and wording for the schedule.

Compliance guidance. This is not fire-safety advice. The Approved Document B figures come from the England volume for buildings other than dwellings read on 7 November 2026; the classification of a given product comes only from its test report to BS EN 13501-1, which was not read for any product here. Check the current edition, the building control body and a fire consultant before relying on a panel in a wall lining.

AT A GLANCE

Construction	What it is	Weight and edge	Repair	Patina and finish
Solid metal sheet	Metal all the way through	Heaviest; edges and cut-outs show the same metal	Repairable and refinishable by the same methods as the face	Patination, polish and re-polish all possible
Metal-clad board	A thin metal sheet bonded to a board	Lighter; the board shows at an unfinished edge	Local repair is harder; a dent in a thin sheet stays	Patination possible on the sheet; depends on its thickness
Aluminium composite panel (ACM)	Thin aluminium skin on each side of a core	Light and flat; the core shows at a cut edge unless it is folded or capped	A dented skin is replaced, not repaired	Applied coating colour; not a patina
Metal-faced high-pressure laminate (HPL)	A decorative metal-effect or metal-faced layer over a resin-bonded core	Light; the dark core shows at an edge	Surface scratches stay; sheets are replaced	Depends on whether the face is real metal or a printed effect; ask
Sprayed ‘liquid’ metal	Metal powder in a binder, built up on a prepared substrate	Follows any shape; the substrate sets weight and edge	Local re-spray and re-finish is possible in principle; confirm with the partner	Polishing, brushing and patination are described for it on our materials page
Cold-cast metal	Metal powder in resin, cast in a mould and finished	Cast to shape; weight is lower than cast metal	Confirm with the partner workshop	Often finished to look patinated; ask what is applied
Metal foil or leaf	A very thin metal film on a sealed base	Negligible; the base sets weight and edge	Re-leafing is the repair; a worn patch shows the base	Can be toned or sealed; leaf can tarnish or wear if unsealed

A practice summary written for specifiers, not taken from a product data sheet. Fire class is deliberately absent from the table: it depends on the product and its core, so ask for the report.

FIRE IN ONE LINE

Approved Document B (England) sets the surface class for walls and ceilings in Table 6.1. The class belongs to the tested product, core included, so ask for the BS EN 13501-1 report for the exact build-up.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

SAY WHICH CONSTRUCTION

Wall panel [ref]: [solid [brass] sheet [3] mm / metal-clad board, [1.5] mm [brass] on [board type] / aluminium composite, [4] mm / metal-faced laminate / sprayed metal face on [substrate]]. The quoted construction is stated by the supplier, with face metal or layer, core and substrate, in writing. No change of construction without written approval.

EDGE

Edges of [ref] to be [folded return / capped with [metal] section / mitred and sealed / left as cut, core exposed]. The core is not to be visible on the finished face or return.

FIRE

Surface class of [ref] on [ceiling / wall] in [room type] to be not worse than [C-s3, d2] to BS EN 13501-1, as required by the project fire strategy. The supplier submits the classification report for the exact build-up, including core, adhesive, substrate and fixing, before ordering. Any exposed core to be declared.

SAMPLE

A full-size sample of the quoted build-up, with a cut edge and a corner, to be approved by [designer] and retained as the reference sample dated [date]. Production to match the sample within the finish tolerance agreed in writing.

TERMS USED

Aluminium composite panel (ACM)

A panel with a thin aluminium skin bonded to each side of a core. The core material varies by product and decides its fire behaviour.

High-pressure laminate (HPL)

Layers of resin-impregnated paper pressed into a rigid sheet. A metal-faced version carries a metal or metal-effect face; whether it is real metal depends on the product.

Sprayed (liquid) metal

Metal powder mixed with a binder and applied over a prepared substrate, then cured and finished. Our materials page describes it as a genuine metal layer.

Euroclass

A reaction-to-fire class from A1 to F under BS EN 13501-1, with suffixes for smoke (s1 to s3) and flaming droplets (d0 to d2).

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- BS EN 13501-1:2018: BSI Knowledge, read 7 Nov 2026: published 31 January 2019, Current; replaces EN 13501-1:2007+A1:2009 (withdrawn); no amendments listed. The standard itself was not read.
- Approved Document B, Volume 2: Buildings other than dwellings: 2019 edition incorporating 2020 and 2022 amendments, collated with 2025, 2026 and 2029 amendments (England); Table 6.1, paras 6.4, 6.11 and 12.15 read 7 Nov 2026. Check which amendments apply to your project.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/real-metal-laminate-and-metal-effect-finishes. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.