

How to Choose a Wood Floor

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When it comes to wood flooring the good news is, you have over 28,000 different options. The bad news is, you have over 28,000 different options.

Part 1 Solid Hardwood, Unfinished or Pre-finished

When you close your eyes and daydream about gorgeous hard wood floors, this is often the kind of wood you see; 100% real wood, 3/4 inch thick. But there are many variations to choose from. The species of wood is one, and the width of the planks is another and the layout is a third option.

The following information should help. Starting with simple descriptions for the most popular types of wood flooring.

- **Wood types:** oak, maple, birch, ash, beech, cherry, walnut and more, including exotic woods (over 90 imported exotic woods available, everything from Bamboo to Honduran Mahogany). Each offers its own distinct grain and characteristics.
- **Widths:** 2-1/4 inch, 2-1/2 inch and 3-1/4 inch strips.
Or 5-inch wide planks.
- Can also be laid in patterns, like herringbone.
- **Grades:**
 - a. Traditional – pronounced natural color, variation and some knots
 - b. Exclusive – full range of natural color with some variation.
 - c. Select and Better – more clear, clean wood
- **Pre-finished style** comes already sanded and stained with 3 to 7 coats of tough clear polyurethane.

Part 2

Engineered Wood Floors

This looks exactly like Solid Wood flooring. But it's not. In some ways it's better. Engineered Wood floors are actually constructed of layers of wood glued together. Multiple laminations add strength and resist the effects of moisture, like unsightly gaps. Installed below grade or above grade with varied wear layers of real wood. It always comes pre-finished.

- Using an engineered wood also takes less wood from the forest without any sacrifice to the way it looks or wears. Wood types: oak, maple, birch, ash, beech, cherry, walnut and more, plus some exotics.
- Widths: 2-1/4 to 3-1/4 inch strips. Or up to 7-inch wide planks.
- Color: You can even find these stained in beautiful colors to liven up a space that needs to be hard-wearing.
- Comes with several coats of tough polyurethane applied at the factory.
- Can be used in basements and other humid rooms.
- Provides more options for condo dwellers including floating over sound and moisture pads.
- Some manufacturers offer wear layers that can be refinished between 1-3 times.

Part 3 - Planks

This is similar to pre-finished Engineered Wood Flooring. However, the construction is a little different. Basically, it's a wide plank made to look like 3 separate strips.

- Wood types: oak, maple, birch, ash, beech, cherry, walnut and more, including exotic woods.
- Installation is fast and easy.
- Can be nailed, glued or floated together, which makes it a good do-it-yourself project if you're experienced. Otherwise, it can be installed by your retailer for a good price.
- Comes with several coats of hard polyurethane applied at the factory.
- Damaged pieces can sometimes be replaced, like ceramic tiles.

Part 4 - Laminates

On a tight budget, but still want a wood looking floor? Laminates are the answer. They're an engineered type of flooring, so they're ideal for kids and pets. And an economical photo reproduction is embedded in the top layer to simulate the look of real wood that come in a variety of qualities and can be extremely hard-wearing.

- If you're ambitious installation can be a week-end do-it-yourself project.
- Wood types: oak, maple, birch and other popular species.
- Comes pre-finished with a tough, easily cleaned coating.
- Excellent moisture resistance makes it ideal for basements, washrooms and bathrooms.

Section 5 - Floor Finishes

After choosing the type of wood floor that suits your needs and budget, along with the wood species that looks best in your home, it's time to select a finish. Wood floor finishes come in three basic styles:

1. The high gloss finish, best for formal low traffic areas, like living rooms.
2. Then there's matte finish, which lacks the dazzling glossy look, but doesn't show dust and minor scratches as easily. Matte finishes are ideal for high traffic areas like hallways.
3. Lastly, there's the in-between semi-gloss finish, almost everyone's number one choice.

Great Stores Don't Grow on Trees

A few hints for finding a great wood flooring store: Look for someone that has been in business for years, with people who really know floors. Look for a vast selection, not just what's "most popular" or on special, but everything from Red Oak to Patagonian Walnut.

Design Considerations

Designing with wood.

Go with elegant wood strips, or go crazy. It's your choice.

- Strips.
- Varied widths.
- Planks.
- Herringbone.
- Parquet.
- Bordered.

3 Edge Options:

Details, details, details.

Three different edges give you three more choices for your floor.

- Squared Edge, creates a smooth contemporary look with no grooves.
- Eased, or Slightly Beveled Edge, offers a subtle micro groove between strips.
- Beveled Edge, lends a casual, country look to the floor.

Subhead Species Hardness Chart:

Which one is how hard?

All wood flooring is hard enough for use in your home. But some woods are harder than others.

Wood Species	Hardness Rating
Douglas Fir	660
Southern Yellow Pine (short leaf)	690
Southern Yellow Pine (Long leaf)	870
Black Cherry	950
Teak	1000
Black Walnut	1010
Bamboo	1120
Heart Pine	1225
Yellow Birch	1260
Red Oak (Northern)	1290
American Beech	1300
Ash	1320
White Oak	1360
Australian Cypress	1375
Hard Maple	1450
Wenge	1620
African Pedauk	1725
Hickory	1820
Pecan	1820
Purpleheart	1860
Jarrah	1910
Merbau	1925
Santos Mahogany	2200
Caribbean Rosewood	2300
Mesquite	2345
Brazilian Cherry	2350

This book, compliments of:



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