

# **Hardwood Floors Shopping List**

## **WHAT FINISH IS THE BEST FOR WOOD FLOORS?**

The finishes on the market today are all good finishes, however, your life style and specific needs may dictate the best finish for you.

## **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOLID WOOD FLOORING AND ENGINEERED WOOD FLOORING**

Each have their specific uses and is dictated by your lifestyle and specific needs. Solid wood flooring can be used on grade and above grade, but not below grade. Solid wood should be in a moisture-controlled environment. Solid wood strip or plank is nail down only and requires a wood subfloor. Solid wood parquet can be glued to a variety of subfloor materials.

Engineered wood flooring consists of a multi-ply, cross-stacked backing with a veneer top layer of a selected species. Engineered wood flooring can be used on grade, above and below grade. Engineered wood flooring is more dimensionally stable so it can be installed in areas where solid wood is not compatible due to moisture.

Engineered strip, plank and parquet are glue down applications over various subfloor materials. Some engineered strip and plank can be nailed down which requires a wood subfloor. Engineered includes floating floors where the tongue and groove are glued together, but the floor is not anchored to the subfloor.

## **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LAMINATE FLOORING AND WOOD FLOORING**

Laminate flooring consists of synthetic backing with a high-pressure laminate surface. Laminate is not renewable and therefore has a short usable life span. Wood flooring consists of wood backing with wood wear surface or solid wood. Wood flooring with proper care will last generations. Wood floors can be refinished, re-sanded, and re-coated to look like new.

## **CRACKS. IS THIS NORMAL?**

Because wood is a natural product it will react to changes in its environment the floor. The most common causes of separations are Mother Nature and dryness. The loss of moisture results in the most frequent reason for shrinkage of individual pieces and cracks. Most cracks are seasonal – they appear in dry months, or the cold season when heating is required, and close during humid periods. This type of separation and close is considered normal. In solid 2 ¼" wide strip oak floors, "dry time" cracks may be the width of a dime's thickness (1/32<sup>nd</sup>). Wider boards will have wider cracks and the reverse is true. The cure is to minimize humidity changes by adding moisture to the air space during dry periods. A constant Relative Humidity (RH) of 50% with a temperature of 65-75 degrees (Fahrenheit) provide stability to the floor.

## **CUPPING**

Cupping, or "washboard". Across the width of one piece of the flooring material, the edges are high, the center is lower. Generally develops gradually.

## **CAUSE:**

Moisture imbalance through the thickness is the only cause. The material was manufactured flat and was flat when installed. Job site or occupant provided moisture is greater on the bottom of the piece than on the top. Find the source of moisture and eliminate it. Common moisture sources and their corrections are: Airborne Relative Humidity– dehumidify air space or– humidify air space during the heating season;

- Wet basement – ventilate, dehumidify;
- Crawlspace – total groundcover with black plastic 6 mil; vents; add exhaust fan on timer;
- Rain handling provisions – correct to drain away from house;
- Reduce excessive lawn & garden moisture, waterproof foundation;
- Repair leaks, i.e. plumbing, roof, doors;
- Don't hose patio,
- In kitchen, the dishwasher and icemaker are notorious leakers.

Expansion is also the result of site moisture and may have moved the floor tight to vertical surfaces. If so, remove flooring along the wall, or saw cut, to relieve pressure.

## **CURE:**

Allow time. Time for the corrections to take effect – to permit the floor to improve on its own. It may become acceptable After stabilized, sand flat and finish.

### **THE ACCEPTABLE GUIDELINES FOR THE APPEARANCE OF THE FINISH OF A WOOD FLOOR**

Inspection should be done from a standing position with normal lighting. Glare, particularly from large windows, magnifies any irregularity in the floors and should not determine acceptance.

No matter how hard the professional tries or how well experienced they are, there are some things you should *not* expect.

A tabletop finish. Each piece of wood flooring sands differently depending on its grain type (plain or quartered) making it virtually impossible for a completely flat surface.

1. Dust-free finish. Since your floor is being finished in your home it is not possible to achieve a "clean room" environment. Some dust will fall onto the freshly applied top finish.
2. A monochromatic floor. Wood, as a natural product, varies from piece to piece. Remember it is not fabricated – it is milled from a tree and will have grain and color variations consistent with the grade and species of flooring selected.
3. A floor that will not indent. In spite of the term "hardwood", wood flooring will indent under high heel traffic (especially heels in disrepair). The finish that is applied will not prevent the dents.

Again, when inspected from a standing position these irregularities may be present but *should not be prominent*.

## **SANDING THE FLOOR**

There are four (4) pieces of equipment, edger, belt sander, drum sander, and buffer. There are up to five (5) different grit patterns that must be selected depending upon finish and/or condition of the floor as well as the species. It is strongly recommended that you contact your local wood flooring professional for sanding and finishing. Doing the job yourself could cause irreparable damage to your wood floor.

## **THE ADVANTAGES/DISVANTAGES OF PREFINISHED AND UNFINISHED (SITE-FINISHED) WOOD FLOORS?**

### **PREFINISHED**

#### **ADVANTAGES:DISADVANTAGES:**

- Little or no color variation Surface not as smooth
- Factory controlled finish + limited colors available
- Faster Installation Limited custom options
- Dust & Odor free
- Immediate use
- Easier to Repair

### **UNFINISHED (SITE FINISHED)**

#### **ADVANTAGES:DISADVANTAGES:**

- Custom color selection, Longer time to install & finish
- Continuous Finish Dust & odors
- Smoother Surface Not as easy to repair

- More custom option