

Bringing nature into your home

## CHOOSING WOOD FLOORS



ENGINEERED WOOD FLOORING

SOLID WOOD FLOORING

THE FINISH

LACQUERED

OILED

SUB-FLOOR

ACCLIMATISATION

MAINTENANCE

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

OAK FLOORING

You are probably reading this because you considering installing wood flooring into your home or office. You will know by now that wood flooring can transform a room and bring a breath of life to a hallway, bedroom, living room or kitchen. With a wide choice of colours and finishes, there is wood flooring to suit every taste, and every room.

You will also know that wood flooring has many advantages over carpeted flooring – it provides excellent sound and thermal insulation, is extremely robust and durable, and with light vacuuming and a wipe down it will retain its lustre for many years. Its hypo-allergenic properties make it the floor of choice for many allergy sufferers.

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## **CHOOSING WOOD FLOORS** (cont)

You will also know that wood flooring has many advantages over carpeted flooring – it provides excellent sound and thermal insulation, is extremely robust and durable, and with light vacuuming and a wipe down it will retain its lustre for many years. Its hypo-allergenic properties make it the floor of choice for many allergy sufferers.

You will also no doubt know that this is only the beginning! Choosing wood flooring can be a daunting prospect, and financially it is obviously a big (albeit a rewarding) investment. Do not be afraid! We are here to help you with your decision-making process. This article is long, we make no apologies for that, but by the time you get to the end of it, we are sure you will feel informed and ready to make a decision.

So let's start with the basics. Engineered or solid. Whichever you choose, you will ultimately need to consider which rooms you are laying it in and the type of heating you intend to use in that room.

### **ENGINEERED WOOD FLOORING**

Engineered wood flooring is a product made up of 2, 3 or multi-layer sandwich construction hardwood/plywood and a top layer of hardwood veneer varying from 3mm – 6mm deep that is bonded on the top surface of the core. This produces a very strong floor that is suitable for a wide variety of load-bearing situations.

The "engineered" product has been designed to provide greater stability, particularly where moisture or heat pose problems for solid hardwood floors. Engineered wood flooring is also ideal for areas where under floor heating is to be used, as its tri-layer construction gives it durability and resistance to expansion or moisture absorption. While engineered boards can be directly adhered to the sub floor, they are more commonly 'floated' on top of an underlay.

The product has the natural characteristics of the selected wood species as opposed to the photographic layer of laminate floors.

The installation costs of engineered flooring are typically lower than for solid flooring and engineered floors are not as prone to gapping, crowning or cupping as solid wood floors.

However engineered wood can only be sanded a limited number of times. You may be aware that you can choose your board as either 3-Strip or 1-Strip.

3-Strip is where there are three rows of timber strips across the width of each board; these individual pieces are known as lamellas. This type of board offers a variation of



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## **CHOOSING WOOD FLOORS (cont)**

### **ENGINEERED WOOD FLOORING (CONT)**

3-Strip is where there are three rows of timber strips across the width of each board; these individual pieces are known as lamellas. This type of board offers a variation of colour & grades within each plank. It is easier to obtain smaller pieces of timber, hence 3-strip products tend to command a lower price point than 1-Strip.

1-Strip is quite simply the term used to describe a single plank. Our 1-strip products are available in a selection of widths and lengths. Bevels are chamfered edges and are only available on plank flooring. All our 1-strip products also feature either a 2 or 4 sided beveled edge. When the 2 long edges are beveled this will emphasize the room length. If the bevels are on all 4 sides of the plank this will shorten the look of the room but make the width of the room appear larger.

### **SOLID WOOD FLOORING**

Solid wood flooring surface can be sanded and refinished numerous times, enabling you to extend the look and life of the wood floor for many decades. It is recommended for those who might wish to rejuvenate the floor from time to time due to heavy foot traffic, and for those who wish to give their property more stability as the solid wood is extremely strong.

It is important however, to consider the fact that solid floors react to heating and moisture, tending to shrink in summer and expand again in winter.

Solid boards are more commonly either pinned or directly adhered to the sub floor. Please note that chipboard does not provide a suitable sub-floor for this type of installation. Also please note that solid flooring **SHOULD NOT BE FLOATED**.

#### **THE FINISH**

You will also need to consider the finish of your floor – whilst some people prefer the high sheen of lacquered wood flooring, others prefer the more natural oiled finish, and with oak wood subtle matt finish that comes from oiling. As the saying goes 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder' and so the chosen finish will simply be down to personal preference.

UV Lacquered floors generally have a higher level of sheen than oiled floors, which tend to have a matt or satin finish. There is little difference in the purchase cost between a lacquered and an oiled floor; therefore it will most likely be the look of the flooring that determines which the consumer will choose. This said, you probably won't be surprised to learn that there are a number of other considerations which should be borne in mind when taking this decision!

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## **CHOOSING WOOD FLOORS (cont)**

### **LACQUERED**

Lacquered hardwood floors are pretty much non-maintenance. Obviously they need to be swept over with a soft broom from time to time and occasionally wiped over with a lightly moistened mop or damp cloth. They will however show scratch marks with usage, as would a lacquered tabletop. With a bad scratch, it is sometimes possible that a French polisher may be able to improve the appearance; however local repairs generally achieve limited success. It is of course possible to completely sand and re-seal a lacquered floor, although this would not normally be required until such times as the flooring has given several years of hard wear. Unless the flooring has been badly damaged during its lifetime, this process will pretty much restore the flooring to 'as new' condition.

### **OILED**

Oiled floors on the other hand are much more forgiving where scratching is concerned. Scratches tend to be less obvious and are also much easier to repair locally. A light sand, followed by the re-application of oil, will generally restore the appearance of the flooring without the need to re-finish the entire area.

There is however the maintenance side to consider, which one needs to take on board, before purchasing an oiled product. It is the saturation of the timber surface with oil; which protects the flooring against spillage and soiling.

Our customers often ask us whether a solid wood floor looks better than an engineered wood floor? Not at all. The top hardwood layer is the same genuine hardwood you have in solid hardwood floors. The finished look of an engineered floor will be the same as a solid wood floor. Whichever wood flooring you choose, remember you will also need to consider what underlay, profiles, adhesives, maintenance products and tools you will need to complete your new wood floor installation with ease.

### **SUB-FLOOR**

Is your sub-floor sufficiently flat?

We recommend that your floor not be more than 4mm high or low over a length of 2.0m, this can easily be assessed by using a 2.0m straight edge. Failure to follow this advice may result in your floor being 'sprung' which will impair its long term performance.

Is your sub-floor sufficiently dry?

If you are going to lay onto a concrete sub-floor a DPM or an underlay which incorporates a DPM must always be used where the floor is to be floated. If you intend adhering



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## **CHOOSING WOOD FLOORS (cont)**

### **SUB-FLOOR (CONT)**

your hardwood flooring directly to a concrete sub-floor always ensure that the moisture content of your screed is within the recommended parameters. Xylo Flooring would recommend that this type of installation only be carried out by a qualified installer.

### **ACCLIMATISATION**

With all installations a period of acclimatisation should be allowed. Engineered & multilayer flooring should be left on site in the room where it is intended to be installed for a minimum period of 48 hours prior to installation. All packages should be laid flat and left unopened. Solid floors should be acclimatized for a minimum period of 5 days, everything else as above.

### **MAINTENANCE**

How often your flooring needs maintaining will depend upon the environment in which the product is laid. Logically; an oiled floor laid in the hallway of a country cottage, where one steps immediately from the outdoors onto the flooring, will require more maintenance than an oiled floor laid to the lounge of a penthouse apartment in the West End of London.

The use of common sense is your best aid in maintaining the long lasting good looks of your oiled floor. At Xylo Flooring we take great pride in manufacturing our products to the highest standards using the finest materials. Given reasonable care, Xylo Wood floors will give many years of hard wear, and will help create a stunning backdrop to traditional and contemporary interiors alike.

### **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The wonderful thing about wood is that it is a sustainable material fashioned by nature. This does mean that:

- Each board is unique and samples must be regarded as a guide rather than an exact match for either colour or grain characteristics.
- Hardwood floors will scratch and indent with use.
- All timber species will change colour with exposure to UV light.
- Timber floors may expand and contract due to local changes in temperature/climate.