

HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

What To Ask When Choosing A Hardwood Floor

(NAPSA)—With a dizzying array of colors, patterns, species and prices, choosing the right hardwood floor for your home can be a daunting task. When visiting your flooring retailer, the experts at Bruce hardwood floors recommend asking the following questions:

How is this flooring constructed?

Solid hardwood flooring is manufactured in varying thickness milled directly from the source hardwood. Solid hardwood floors can be bought unfinished and factory finished. Factory-finished floors are often UV-cured, which creates a stronger, more durable finish than site finishes. Factory finished floors are typically less messy and faster to install.

Engineered hardwood floors consist of cross-ply layers of wood glued together under tremendous heat and pressure. It is then stained and finished. Some engineered floors are injected with liquid acrylics to make the product up to 3 times as hard as the non-treated species, utilized in commercial applications but available residentially. Manufacturers are also treating engineered floors with a distressing process for a more antique look. Engineered floors are very durable and more stable than solid hardwood flooring, and they can often be refinished a number of times if necessary.

What styles are available?

Strip flooring is typically defined as flooring that is 2 1/4" wide, the most traditional look. Planks are typically 3" or wider. Because they are more stable, engineered floors are often available in much wider widths than solid hardwoods, up to 7 inches or more. Edge and end treatments vary as well. Square edges create a uniform, almost seamless look. Treated edges are used in more casual settings to emphasize each individual strip or plank. Treated edges range from a very shallow edge to a deeply beveled edge.



Where can I install this floor?

Solid hardwood floors must be nailed or stapled to a wood sub-floor and cannot be installed below ground (i.e., in the basement). Engineered floors can be installed on, above or below ground over a multitude of subflooring products including many pre-existing floor-covering products. Hardwoods are not recommended for moisture-prone or high humidity areas like full bathrooms.

What is the grade?

Solid and engineered hardwood floors are graded to consider natural character marks including knots and mineral streaks. Your personal preferences will determine the amount of character you want to see in your floor. The length and breadth of the warranty coverage usually indicates a higher grade of wood. In general, manufacturers use the ratings as a classification system. Good floors usually contain more natural characteristics, while best floors are more selective in allowing character marks.

What species will achieve the look I want?

Consider the characteristics of the species. Oak is harder and more durable than many hardwood species, making it less prone to show dents and wear over time. While oak is the most commonly used, exotic species like kempas and merbau are becoming more popular. Exotic and domestic hardwoods have their own inherent style and grain pattern, so the best hardwood flooring is simply a matter of your own personal taste.