



Choosing a Hardwood Floor...

What to consider...

The more educated you can be before starting the process, the easier it will be. And when talking with a hardwood expert, you'll be confident with questions that come your way.

By the time you finish reading this, you'll be acquainted with the important elements for choosing a hardwood floor, including pattern, species, grade, layout, finish. And, whether pre-finished or unfinished solid hardwood or pre-finished engineered flooring is the best choice for your needs.

Let's Begin with Pattern.

The floor's pattern, also known as positioning is the initial consideration. Your wood flooring should ideally be installed in the opposite direction of your sub-floor joists. But you should also consider the shape and size of the room. For example, installing the strips lengthwise may make a long room look even longer, or it may be more flattering to lay the strips diagonally.

You might also consider customizing the installation with a border or medallion or other decorative inset in the center of a room or near an entrance. This can be decided during your initial consultation.

Selecting a Species.

Each species of wood has its own grain, color, and veining. Your choice of species depends on your personal preferences and the effects you'd like to achieve. The most popular species are oak and maple, followed by birch, ash, beech, cherry and walnut.

Exotic, deluxe woods are also available, such as Brazilian cherry, mahogany and sapele, which are very warm in color and extremely hard.

More than 80 percent of wood flooring in America is oak – which then it's largely a matter of red or white oak. For a species other than oak, consider these four factors – a wood's appearance, cost, hardness and stability.

Cost may be the biggest consideration for the customer – very few woods are less expensive than oak. If you are seeking flooring for a high-traffic area or have pets, softer woods such as bamboo or pine are not recommended. This should be part of the discussion with your hardwood-flooring expert. Depending on your geographic location, stability of the species will come into play. If you live in a region with seasonal humidity, movement in the floor may occur. Some species are more dimensionally stable than others and therefore less susceptible to movement when the humidity changes.

Making the Grade.

Grading is a means of rating strips according to variations in the woods natural color. For example, "select & better" grade woods are more uniform in color than "rustic" or "traditional" grades, which presents greater, more pronounced natural color variations.

To understand the grading system better, compare two samples of the same species with different grades. Also compare a number of strips from the same box to check the grading and manufacturing. Lay down a few strips and assemble them. The tongues and grooves should fit perfectly and easily together. Check the floor yourself for uniformity by running your hand over the surface to ensure it's even, indicating a precise cut. Irregular spacing between the strips leaves room for dirt and grime.

Note: the grade that you choose will ultimately make a difference in price.

Layout – The Most Dramatic Decision

A conventional layout – wall-to-wall – is the simplest way to cover a floor, and the most traditional. For a more decorative look, you can choose a framed layout – two, three or four boards wide, depending on the size of the room; this can get very intricate. A diagonal layout may be appropriate for some rooms.

As discussed earlier in the pattern section, you can use special inlays in the corner or perhaps around the edge of a fireplace or entryway. If you desire, a feature strip in a contrasting species can be installed around the whole room, or consider a medallion or other artistic touch for a focal point.

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Types of Wood Flooring

Pre-finished or unfinished?

Which is more important to you – speed of job completion or multiple options? You can have a pre-finished floor more quickly and with less disruption. Or, with unfinished flooring, you can have more options in terms of species and color.

Polyurethane applied after the installation is much less wear-resistant than factory finishes. Pre-finished floors, on the other hand, are finished with multiple coatings of polyurethane applied in ideal conditions and dried under ultraviolet lights and are generally guaranteed for 15, 25 or 30 years. Made of aluminum oxide, these finishes are exceptionally durable.

Solid or Engineered?

Is the installation below grade? Humidity or moisture may be a problem. Is the floor height matching to other floor coverings critical? Is the installation over wood joists or over a concrete slab?

These variables will dictate which product is best for you. During the initial consultation, this is pertinent to the discussion in order to begin viewing the options available for your flooring needs. Both products offer a variety of choices in regards to species, grade, finish, layout and installation process.

Engineered should not be confused with laminate flooring. Laminate flooring is made of laminate planks that only have the appearance of wood, finished with a plastic polymer coating and cannot be refinished and re-coated. Engineered hardwood provides a wear layer that is attached to ply-wood (acting as a sub-floor), at least five layers, though brands vary. This type can be resanded and recoated just like a solid hardwood floor.

Ready. Set. GO!

Remember, you'll probably only purchase a hardwood floor once in your life. The information provided in this guide is all the information you need to make a wise choice in your hardwood flooring purchase.

As you head down to the D-Lux Hardwood Floor's showroom (address below) remember these basic rules:

Good planning will save you costly surprises and bad experiences.

Your hardwood-flooring expert will provide you sound advice and successful results.

Purchasing a quality product will save you worries and give you peace of mind for years to come.