

ABRASION

Abrasion is the action of wearing away a floor finish film by friction. It is usually caused by grit, sand or any hard particle dragged across the surface of the floor.

ACCLIMATION

Acclimation refers to wood being allowed to balance to an equilibrium moisture content with the surrounding environment. Unfinished wood floors should be allowed to acclimate to the target environment of the occupied building. This is performed by stacking the wood flooring with “stickers” of wood between the layers to expose all surfaces to the air. Prefinished floors arrive in cartons, and do not require acclimation outside the carton. It is still recommended you introduce the cartoned flooring to the jobsite a few days before installation.

ACRYLIC IMPREGNATED

The generic name for wood-plastic-composites utilizing wood impregnated with acrylic monomers and polymerized within the wood cells by gamma irradiation.

ACRYLIC-URETHANE

Acrylic-urethane is a clear, tough, durable, and chemical resistant finish that is applied as a protective top layer on wood flooring.

ALUMINUM OXIDE

Aluminum oxide is an extremely hard man-made material (used in grey sandpaper for instance). Particles of aluminum oxide suspended in the factory finishes of wood flooring greatly increase abrasion resistance and allow for wear-through warranties not yet available from finishes applied at the jobsite to unfinished flooring.

ANTIQUÉ

Antique wood flooring usually refers to flooring milled from recycled timbers from dismantled buildings. To “antique” a wood floor (“antique” as a verb) usually means a form of distressing and/or staining to mimic an old foot-worn floor.

BLIND NAILING

Blind nailing is when the nail heads are concealed by the adjacent piece of flooring. Nails are driven at an angle at the point where the top of the tongue meets the flooring.

BOW

If a plank or strip has curvature from end to end flat-wise it is bowed.

CERTIFIED

Certified wood flooring means that the harvesting and manufacturing processes meet environmental impact standards set by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The FSC is an internationally recognized non-profit organization devoted to improving the world’s forests.

COMMON GRADE, #1

#1 common grade allows for a wider color variation and for occasional small sound (secure) knots. #1 Common shows more of the natural characteristics of the wood and includes both heartwood and sapwood.

COMMON GRADE, #2

#2 common grade includes boards that do not qualify as Select or #1 Common. This grade, with names like “Country”, “Rustic”, “Cabin”, “History” or “Tavern”, exhibits all the color variety and allows for any sized sound knot. Planet Hardwood refers to this grade as “knotty”.

CORE

Any of the layers of an engineered floor between the face or wear layer, and the back is called the core.

CROOK

A board that has curvature from end-to-end edge-wise from a straight line is crooked.

BASEBOARD

Baseboard is a strip of wood running horizontally against the wall along the floor. It functions as a trim piece that conceals the expansion gap between the flooring and the wall.

BIRDS-EYE

A figure on wood, usually maple, composed of many small rounded areas resembling a birds eye.

COMPRESSION SET

Compression set describes a condition whereby the wood flooring expands from moisture, but is restricted by an adjacent piece, resulting in the wood cells crushing. When this happens, the wood does not go back to its original shape when it returns to its normal moisture content.

CRAZING

Crazing is the appearance of very fine cracks in a floor finish.

CROWNING

Crowning is when the center face of a board is higher in the middle than both edges like an inverted “U”.

Crowning is often a response to excess moisture or dryness on one surface of the board or from sanding a cupped board smooth, which appears as a crowned board when the floor relaxes to its original position. Crowning is the opposite of cupping.

CUPPING

Cupping is when the center face of a board is lower in the middle than both edges. Cupping is often a response to excess moisture or dryness on one surface of the board or from sanding a crowned board smooth, which appears as a cupped board when the floor relaxes to its original position. Cupping is the opposite of crowning.

DECIDUOUS

Deciduous trees are classified botanically as Angiosperms and shed their foliage annually. They are commonly called hardwoods.

DISTRESSED

Distressed flooring has been scraped, scratched or gouged to give it a foot worn look.

EASED EDGE

See "Micro-bevel"

END MATCHED

A profile on both ends of pieces of lumber; one end with a tongue and the other with a groove, so that when butted together, the tongue engages the groove.

ENGINEERED WOOD FLOORING

Engineered wood flooring is a sandwich of alternating wood layers designed to provide stability. It's basically a solid wood top "wear" layer that is permanently bonded to its own wood subfloor, thereby allowing it to be installed directly over concrete. An engineered floor has approximately one sixth the seasonal movement of a solid wood floor of the same specie and width. It makes good use of the timber resource by concentrating the best wood on the wear layer. Planet Hardwood recommends engineered flooring for glue-down and floating installations, and for flooring wider than 6" in width. Many engineered floors can be nailed down also, and some offer a thick re-sandable wear layer comparable to a solid wood floor.

ENDGRAIN

Endgrain is the grain that is visible on a cross section of wood. Endgrain flooring are slices of wood installed like tile.

EQUILIBRIUM MOISTURE CONTENT (EMC)

EMC is the moisture content at which wood neither gains nor loses moisture from the surrounding atmosphere. Wood moistens or dries out in an attempt to achieve a balance with the surrounding conditions. The amount of moisture in wood is expressed as a percentage and is initially determined by how it is dried as lumber after it has been sawn from the log. A target EMC for wood that is prepared for interior use in North America is 6 – 9%.

FACE

The "face" of a wood floor is the exposed surface.

FACE NAIL

Face nailing means the nail goes through the surface of the wood perpendicular to the exposed surface. This is recommended for any solid wood floor over 8" in width, or when the flooring is too close to a wall or obstruction to use a floor nailer. Usually, the first and last rows of flooring require face nailing. The nail heads are then covered with a moulding (baseboard, quarter-round, or shoe), or are set and covered with a matching wood putty.

FIGURE

Figure in wood is the design or distinctive markings produced by annual growth rings, rays, knots, deviation from regular grain such as interlocked and wavy grain, and irregular attractive discoloration. Figured wood is a small percentage of the total yield and is only available as an exclusive grade from mills who take the extra steps to separate it from the mainstream production. Most flooring mills do not make the distinction and include it with the rest of the flooring. Figured wood flooring has limited availability and is priced at a premium. Birdseye Maple or Curly Birch are examples of figured wood. Other words used to describe various figures are quilted, tiger, and flame.

FINISH

Finishes refer to coatings designed to protect wood, like urethane, wax, shellac etc..

FLOATING

Floating refers to an installation whereby the floor is attached to itself and not to the subfloor, thereby "floating" over a seamless cushioned vapor barrier. This method is suitable for any subfloor and is especially recommended for radiant heat or below grade installations. All floating installations use engineered flooring specifically designed to accommodate that method.

FLOORING NAILER

A flooring nailer is a hand-operated tool (usually powered by compressed air) which drives serrated flooring nails at a prescribed angle through the flooring at the point of the right angle at the top of the tongue. Subsequent rows of flooring conceal the nail heads. This is called "blind nailing".

GLOSS

Gloss is the measure of shininess represented as a number from 1 to 100 (100 is a mirror) which rates the percentage of light that is reflected off of a surface.

GLUE-DOWN

A glue-down wood floor is installed in a trowel-spread mastic much like flooring tile. This method is popular for installations directly onto a concrete subfloor, but can also be installed on plywood. All engineered flooring and some solid flooring can be installed using the glue-down method.

GRADE

Grading is the designation of the relative characteristics and quality of a piece of wood or other manufactured wood product like flooring. The lumber standards are different from the flooring standards that determine grade but are the most alike when it comes to appearance. Most domestic flooring is available in three grades: Select (clear and somewhat uniform), #1 Common (variable in color) and #2 common (variable in color and with knots). Many flooring manufacturers create their own descriptive names (like "country" or "tavern" for #2 common) rather than using lumber terminology. This allows for grading standards that are more inclusive.

GRAIN

Grain is the appearance characteristic determined by the size, alignment, and color of the contrasting fibers in a piece of wood.

HAND DISTRESSED

See "Distressed".

HANDSCRAPED

Handscraping described the smoothing process employed on hardwood floors before the invention of sandpaper or motors. A burnished piece of metal was drawn towards the scraper resulting in a very smooth finish. The modern interpretation of handscraped flooring is actually hand distressed flooring, making it look like a foot-worn floor. This is often accomplished by a scraping motion either by hand or machine, and

HARDNESS

Hardness is the intrinsic property of a wood that enables it to resist indentation. It is measured in the pounds per square inch of pressure that is required to sink a .444 inch steel ball one half its diameter into the surface of the wood dried to a 12% moisture content. This method is called the Janka test. Harder woods have higher numbers.

HARDWOOD

Hardwood is a general term for the timber of broad leafed deciduous trees classified botanically as Angiosperm. The term has no reference to the relative hardness of the wood. Hardwood lumber is cut to random widths and lengths to maximize the value and yield of the log. Its end use is often undetermined at the time the lumber is cut. Softwoods are usually manufactured to standard sizes with a primary end-use in mind as construction lumber (called "dimension" lumber, like 2 X 4's).

HEARTWOOD

Heartwood refers to the wood making up the centre part of the tree. Cells of heartwood are not alive and do not contribute to the life processes of the tree. Heartwood is usually darker than sapwood (the outer "alive" layer of a tree, just under the bark). A mix of heartwood and sapwood usually appears in the #1 and #2 Common grades, but is limited in the Select grade.

HERRINGBONE PATTERN

Herringbone refers to an installation pattern of fixed length pieces of flooring arranged in a repeating V-shaped configuration.

HYGROMETER

A hygrometer is an instrument for measuring the humidity in the air.

HYGROSCOPIC

Hygroscopic means having the property of readily absorbing moisture from the atmosphere

JANKA

The name of the test used to determine the intrinsic hardness of a wood. It is a number representing the pounds per square inch of pressure required to sink a .444 inch steel ball one half its diameter into the surface of the wood. A higher number denotes a harder wood.

KILN

A kiln is a chamber used for seasoning timber in which the temperature and humidity of circulating air is controlled to gradually reduce the moisture content of the wood. Drying wood in a kiln is an art to ensure that the wood dries evenly to retain its strength, aesthetic properties and the targeted moisture content. Different species and thicknesses dry at different rates and require a different balance of temperature and humidity. Only kiln dried lumber is used in the production of flooring.

KILN DRIED (KD)

Kiln dried lumber is lumber that has been dried in an oven or kiln.

KNOT

A part of the tree where a branch has been overgrown by the tree and incorporated into its trunk. The appearance of a knot is determined its angle relative to the surface of the board. Flooring in a #2 Common grade allows for knots that are "tight" and "sound", which means that they are not detected as loose.

LAMINATE

The word laminate means "to make by uniting several layers" and was once used in the wood flooring industry to

describe engineered flooring. Today, the word has been “captured” by the plastic laminate industry to describe flooring with a melamine top layer over a photograph of whatever they are trying to mimic, laminated on top of a reconstituted powdered wood called fiberboard. Except for the plastic top coat, every part is still from a tree and eventually exhibits the same response to moisture and wear-and-tear.

MASTIC

Mastics are adhesives applied with a notched trowel to the subfloor for the purpose of securing tile or wood. Sometimes they are referred to as “full spread” mastics or adhesives and they are the bonding material for glue-down wood flooring installations. They can be applied directly to concrete or wood subfloors.

MICRO-BEVEL

Micro-bevel refers to the slight easing of the top corners of prefinished wood flooring. This is done for the protection of the homeowner so that if there is any reason for an installed piece of flooring to be slightly higher than the adjacent piece, there is no chance of a crisp edge of wood splintering or compromising the finish. Micro bevels are very slight due to the increased precision of the wood flooring manufacturing equipment, and greater quality control procedures. A few years ago they were called “v-grooves” and were much deeper.

MINERAL STREAK

Mineral streak is a natural dark discoloration in the appearance of certain hardwoods.

MOISTURE CONTENT (MC)

MC is the weight of the water within a piece of lumber measured as a percentage of the weight of the dry wood. Most hardwoods manufactured in the United States are produced to standards developed by the National Hardwood Lumber Association (NHLA). Moisture content in wood prepared for interior use in North America is typically 6-9%.

MOVEMENT

“Movement in service” refers to the degree of expansion and contraction wood will experience in response to accepting or giving off moisture. Wood is hygroscopic like a sponge, and will swell or shrink.

NAIL-DOWN

This is the traditional method of installation using nails or staples and requires a wood subfloor. All solid flooring and many engineered floors can be installed this way. The nails or staples are driven at an angle through the tongue and are hidden by the next piece of flooring. This is called “blind nailing.”

OIL MODIFIED URETHANES

Oil-modified urethanes are a wood floor finish containing urethane in an oil base, usually mineral spirits or a similar petroleum distillate.

OUT-OF-SQUARE

If the ends of a board or flooring are not at a right angle, they are out-of-square.

OVERLAP MOULDINGS

Overlap mouldings are designed to accommodate floating floors. Instead of butting up to the adjacent flooring pieces, they overlap and conceal an edge of the flooring to hide the seasonal expansion.

OVERWOOD

Overwood refers to a condition where an installed piece of flooring is higher or lower than the adjacent piece.

PANELIZATION

Also known as side-bonding, panelization is when flooring separates in a group rather than expanding and contracting as individual pieces. This sometimes occurs when a jobsite finish has seeped between flooring boards and has bonded adjacent pieces together.

PARQUETRY FLOORING

Parquetry typically refers to flooring made of small pieces laid on a substrate in a repeating geometric pattern.

PEELED VENEER

See “Rotary-Cut Veneer”

PLAIN SAWN

Plain sawn describes lumber that has been cut with the growth rings at a 0 – 45 degree angle to the surface of the board. Plain sawn describes most lumber and flooring.

PLANK

Plank flooring has a face width of 3” or wider.

POLYURETHANE

Polyurethane or “poly” is a clear, tough, durable, and chemical resistant finish that is applied as a protective top layer on wood flooring. Urethane films provide hardness without brittleness better than most other polymers.

POT LIFE

Pot life is the timeframe when an opened can of glue or finish is usable after being exposed to the air.

PREFINISHED WOOD FLOORING has a factory applied finish. No sanding is required after installation.

Prefinished floors can be solid or engineered and typically carry 25 year wear-through warranties in residential applications. These warranties come with a lot of fine print, but call attention to the finish’s durability. The advance in technology that allows these warranties is the suspension of aluminum oxide particles within the finish.

Aluminum oxide is an extremely hard man-made material (used in grey sandpaper for instance). It is usually the second coat of a multi-coat process. The top coats are several layers of a clear ultra-violet cured acrylic polyurethane designed to allow for future cosmetic recoating without sanding the wood itself.

QUARTER ROUND

Quarter round is a lineal moulding, typically $\frac{3}{4}$ " X $\frac{3}{4}$ ", with a cross-section that looks like a quarter of a circle. It is often used in flooring installations to conceal the $\frac{1}{2}$ " expansion gap at the perimeter of the floor.

QUARTER-SAWN

A method of cutting lumber where the annual growth rings of the log are between 45 – 90 degrees to the face of the board. Also called straight-grained, quarter-sawn lumber tends to be more dimensionally stable and slightly harder than plain-sawn or flat-sawn lumber.

RADIANT HEAT

Radiant heat refers to a heating system that raises the temperature of a floor or wall surface. Radiant heat in the floor creates a macro climate of dry air that can put undo stress on a wood floor if not properly designed and regulated. Engineered flooring is routinely warranted for radiant heat as long as correct installation procedures are followed, the temperature of the water does not exceed 89 degrees F, and the surface temperature of the wood flooring does not exceed 80 degrees F. Solid wood flooring over radiant heat is endorsed by the National Wood Flooring Association only with a specially prepared floating subfloor system involving two layers of $\frac{1}{2}$ " plywood.

RANDOM LENGTHS

Random lengths is a lumber or flooring tally containing various lengths.

RANDOM WIDTHS

Random widths is a lumber or flooring tally containing various widths.

RAY FLECK

Fleck is an appearance feature or figure on the face of a quarter-sawn board.

REDUCER

A reducer is a lineal wood moulding designed to provide a gradual transition where wood flooring meets a thinner flooring material, like vinyl or linoleum.

RELATIVE HUMIDITY (RH)

This is the amount of moisture in the air represented as a percentage of the maximum moisture carrying capacity of the air at a given temperature. Warmer air can hold more moisture. Relative humidity is important because it affects the stability of wood flooring. Extremes in relative humidity translate to excessive seasonal movement in solid wood flooring and a high degree of internal stress in engineered wood flooring. Wood, people, and most living things are the most comfortable in a relative humidity of 35 – 65%. Most wood flooring manufacturers set limits on RH to ensure the best performance of their product and to honor the warranty.

RIFT SAWN

Rift sawn is when the lumber rings make angles to the surface of the wood from 30 to 60 degrees.

RISER

A riser is the vertical part of the stair running in the same direction as the tread, usually one piece of wood or plywood.

RIVER RECOVERED

River recovered means the logs for the raw material were dredged from river bottoms.

ROTARY-CUT VENEER

Rotary-cut veneer is a common method of manufacturing veneers for plywood and is cut from a log in one long sheet like a roll of paper towel. It results in a grain pattern different from lumber and is cheaper than sliced or sawn veneers.

SAND AND FINISH

Sand and finish is the process an unfinished wood floor undergoes after installation. See "unfinished wood flooring".

SAPWOOD

Sapwood is the "live" outer layer of wood in a tree that lies between the bark and the heartwood. Sapwood is usually lighter in color and gradually becomes heartwood as the tree ages. In some species, like Maple and Ash, the percentage of the lighter sapwood determines the appearance grade.

SAWN VENEER

A sawn veneer is produced by sawing versus peeling or slicing. Sawn veneers are too thick to peel or slice, and are considered a signature of quality in an engineered floor.

SCREW AND PLUG

Screwed and plugged refers to a method of attaching solid wood flooring whereby the planks are screwed through the face of the flooring, the screws are countersunk, and the screw heads are concealed with wood buttons, or plugs.

SELECT

Select is a grade that describes lumber or flooring that is somewhat uniform in color without knots.

SHELF LIFE

Shelf life is the length of time an unopened product will remain unchanged in its container after packaging.

SHOE MOULDING

Shoe moulding is like a quarter round with a dimension of 5/8" X 3/4".

SIDE MATCHED

Side matched refers to a profile on both edges of pieces of lumber; one side with a tongue and the other with a groove so that when butted together, the tongue engages the groove, .

SILVICULTURE

Silviculture is the art and science of growing and tending a forest. It includes assessing sites before they are harvested to determine what is growing there now, evaluating soil conditions to determine moisture and nutrient levels as well as assessing the types of plants that are growing on the site.

SLICED VENEER

A sliced veneer is sliced off a log or flitch with a knife in a direction parallel to the axis of the log. This is the same direction that lumber is cut, so a sliced veneer exhibits the same grain pattern as lumber. It is more expensive than a peeled veneer.

SLIP TONGUE

A spline is fitted and glued into the groove side of tongue and groove flooring to create a flooring piece with a double tongue. This is done to change the direction in which a floor is laid.

SOFTWOOD

Wood from trees commonly referred to as conifers or evergreens, classified botanically as Gymnosperm, which in almost all cases do not seasonally shed their foliage. Although generally softer than hardwoods, the degree of hardness does not enter into determining whether a wood is a hardwood or softwood. Softwoods are usually manufactured to standard sizes with a primary end-use in mind as construction lumber. Hardwood lumber is cut to random widths and lengths to maximize the value and yield of the log. Its end use is often undetermined at the time the lumber is cut.

SOLID WOOD FLOORING

Solid wood flooring is the term for individual pieces of wood milled to a tongue-and-groove profile, typically 3/4" thick and nailed to a plywood subfloor. It is available with a factory applied finish, or as an unfinished floor requiring jobsite sanding and finishing. Solid wood flooring offers the most choices in specie, grade and dimension.

SOUND KNOT

A knot that is solid across its face, at least as hard as the surrounding wood, shows no indication of decay, and is integrated by growth to keep it in place.

SOUND

A term referring to a board which has no or very few defects which will effect its strength.

SPLINE

See "Slip tongue".

SPREAD RATE

Spread rate is the amount of coverage of a full spread mastic using a specified notched trowel.

SQUARE-EDGED

A flooring profile without a micro-bevel or eased edge.

STAINED WOOD

If a color different than the natural wood color is desired or if the natural wood color is too variable, a stain may be used to color the wood. Stains do not penetrate wood deeply, and they may fade with continued exposure to bright light. Stains penetrate more evenly with open grain woods like oak, ash, and walnut while the close grained woods such as maple, birch and beech, will take stain much more slowly and unevenly. Stains may pose challenges if the floor is ever refinished because the uneven penetration may require aggressive sanding of the surface to remove all the stain.

STAIR NOSING

A stair nosing is the rounded overhanging edge of a stair tread. Most wood flooring offers matching stair nosings, which is a linear moulding that engages the flooring profile along one edge and trims off a stair, a landing, a balcony, or any step to a lower adjacent area..

STICKERS

Stickers are strips placed perpendicularly between layers of stacked boards or flooring to improve air circulation. All lumber put into a kiln is "stickered" to promote uniform results by exposing every surface. Unfinished wood flooring should be "stickered" at the jobsite to arrive at equilibrium with the target environment of the occupied building.

STRIP

Strip flooring has a face dimension of less than 3", most commonly 2 1/4".

SURFACE CHECKING

Surface checking, also known as face checking, is when there is a small rupture or split in the surface of the wood in a direction parallel to the length of the board. This is caused by a stress, usually in response to extremely dry conditions. Certain species like Australian Cypress commonly surface check without compromising the utility of the floor, since it does not penetrate deeply into the wood.

STRAIGHT GRAIN

Also known as quartersawn, it is wood in which the direction and alignment of the wood fibers are parallel and run the length of the piece of wood.

T-MOULDING

T-moulding is a linear wood moulding shaped like a "t" or mushroom designed to provide a "cap" where a wood floor meets a floor of similar or equal thickness.

THRESHOLD

Threshold is a moulding that is designed to trim off a floor around sliding doors, fireplaces and any transition area.

TONGUE AND GROOVE

Tongue and groove refers to a profile whereby a protruding "tongue" along one edge and/or end fits a matching groove in the adjacent piece.

TROWEL

A trowel is a hand tool used to spread mastic on a subfloor. Depending on the thickness of the flooring, and the manufacturer's recommendations, the trowel will be specified to have notches of a certain shape and size that will determine the amount of mastic that is applied. The coverage is called the "spread rate".

TREAD

The horizontal platform of a stair. When the exposed tread is wood, it is composed of a solid or glued-together single piece, or made up of flooring pieces that are trimmed off at the front lip of the tread with a moulding called a stair nosing.

UNDERLAYMENT

Underlayment is a layer of plywood or other manufactured board used as a base material under finished flooring. Underlayment is also used as a substrate to increase the strength and/or smoothness of the flooring, or in some cases to provide a nailing surface on a concrete floor.

UNFINISHED WOOD FLOORING

Unfinished wood flooring is finished after jobsite sanding and results in a completely smooth surface, without the micro-bevelled edges typical of prefinished flooring. The performance of these finishes, although durable, depends on proper application and does not typically carry warranties. An unfinished wood floor can be stained, and offers the choice of a surface "film" finish (like a prefinished floor), or a penetrating finish like oil.

UV-CURED

UV-cured describes factory applied finishes that are cured (hardened) with ultra violet lights.

VAPOR BARRIER

Any material that retards or prevents the transition of moisture vapor is a vapor barrier.

VENEER

A veneer is a thin sheet of wood sliced, sawn, or rotary-cut from a log. When assembled it is referred to as a "ply".

WALK-OFF MAT

Walk-off mats are recommended at entrances to remove and trap gritty soil from shoes.

WARP

Warp is any deviation of a board from flat or true.

WEAR LAYER

The wear layer of a wood floor refers to the top usable layer of wood. On a solid wood floor it is all the material above the top of the tongue. On an engineered wood floor, it is the top layer.

WIRE BRUSHED

Wire brushing the surface of flooring is done to leave a texture that suggests an aged look.

WORM HOLES

Worm holes are simply holes made by worms or larvae boring into the wood.

YIELD

The proportion of the log converted into lumber or other wood products of value. This involves many variables especially the skill of the sawyer.