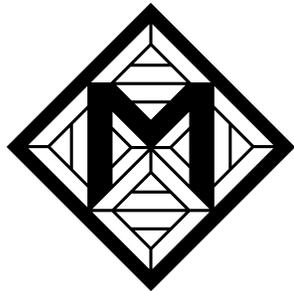




HOW TO BUY PREFINISHED FLOORING



THE
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How To Buy **PREFINISHED FLOORING**

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WHAT IS PREFINISHED FLOORING?

Answer: Hardwood flooring that is already sanded, stained and finished right out of the box. There are no further steps to finish the floor after you install the boards. It's ready to walk on!

Traditionally, to have a wood floor installed in your home meant that raw tongue and groove wood flooring boards would be nailed or glued to a subfloor, then sanded, stained, and finished inside the home.

This long process takes time, creates a lot of dust and fumes inside the home, and gives more chances for mistakes to be made during the process.

Today, prefinished wood floors solve all of those issues and provide many people with a floor that looks great. With proper care and maintenance, they can also last a lifetime.

Instead of on-site sanding and finishing, these steps are done in a factory controlled environment with precise calibrated equipment. The finished flooring boards are fully cured, then carefully wrapped and boxed to be delivered to the job site. They can be installed in one step without creating dust or fumes.

The whole process takes a day or less depending on the job size, and homeowners can walk on their new hardwood floors right away.

While this process seems straightforward in print, it can be quite a daunting task when going through it yourself.

That's why we're here to help - we've seen it all and are going to guide you through everything you need to know when buying a prefinished floor.

TO HELP YOU GET STARTED

To narrow down your options, fill out this checklist as you go through the guide. Go over this with your installer to be sure that you are choosing the correct floor for your space.

COLOR _____

TYPE (ENGINEERED OR SOLID) _____

SPECIES _____

TEXTURE _____

WIDTH _____

CUT _____

ADDITIONAL PIECES NEEDED
(MOLDINGS, STAIR PARTS, TRANSITION PIECES)



HIRING AN INSTALLER

Should you hire a professional installer for prefinished flooring?

Short answer: Yes, you probably should.

Choosing prefinished wood flooring is a great solution for any home or flooring project. Although prefinished wood flooring is overall a simpler product, installing wood floors is an intermediate to advanced level home improvement project.

Our recommendation is to work with a professional installer that will make sure your floor is installed correctly.

All of this requires knowledge and experience to do well, which is why we highly recommend working with a professional when it comes to wood flooring.

THE BENEFITS OF HAVING A PROFESSIONAL INSTALL YOUR WOOD FLOORING:

- They will *measure* your home accurately and know how to factor in additional flooring for waste.
- They will *inspect* your home and subfloor to make sure wood flooring is the right choice for you.
- They will *measure moisture* in your home, new flooring and subfloor to know when the new flooring is properly acclimated and ready to install.
- They will know, and already have, the *right tools* for the job and the specific flooring you picked out.
- They will *prepare your subfloor* to be clean, dry, sound and flat prior to installing new wood floors.
- They will ensure the flooring is *installed straight* around complicated angles, doorways, and other flooring surfaces.



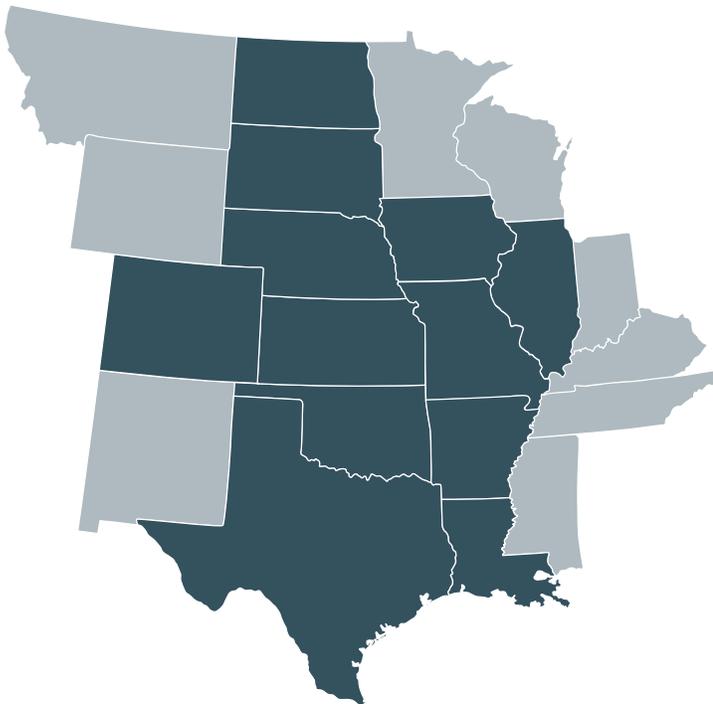
Longhouse Plank "Heorot" from Real Wood Floors.

That said, it is possible to DIY your own hardwood floors. There are many resources available that can help someone who is comfortable with intermediate to advanced home improvement projects do a good job.

If you don't have an installer and would like a referral, we can help!

We are the go-to wood flooring supplier throughout the Midwest. Contact one of our 12 locations and we can steer you towards a professional that will do a great job for you.

You can also stop by one of our showroom locations to get inspiration for your wood flooring project and connect with an authorized retailer or installer.



OUR LOCATIONS

AUSTIN

DALLAS

HOUSTON

NW ARKANSAS

OMAHA

TULSA

Find A Retailer

CEDAR RAPIDS

DENVER

KANSAS CITY

OKLAHOMA CITY

ST. LOUIS

WEST PLAINS

Contact Us

COLOR

We believe color is the most important aspect in choosing a floor for your home.

If the color isn't right for your home and your style, nothing else really matters.

Take time to consider the other elements in your home that you don't want to change. These could be paint colors, trim, cabinets, other floor coverings, and furniture.

Then decide whether a light, medium, or dark wood floor is best. This will narrow down the choices and help you focus on the floors that you know will work in your home.

LIGHT



Brick & Board "Atrium" from Real Wood Floors

MEDIUM



Storehouse "Crate" from Real Wood Floors

DARK



Durango "Guinness" from Tradewinds Flooring

Steadfast "Tradition" from Real Wood Floors

ONE OF A KIND WOOD FLOORS

Have you ever wanted something truly unique? Something that wasn't mass produced and looked just like what everyone else has?

Many of our prefinished floors undergo a special reactive stain process that react with tannins in the wood to create a unique look. Factors like soil composition, amounts of sunlight and moisture, altitude and temperature can all affect how much tannin is in a tree.

A reactive stain creates a special color in a relatively small batch of flooring. This gives you a truly one of a kind hardwood floor.

It's especially important to approve these floors before they are installed. It's best to even order a box of the current lot before you make your final decision to see what the floor will look like in your home.

We place a special sticker on our flooring samples that undergo a reactive

one of a kind. 

This sample board is meant to show a color concept and your floor may vary. The special color treatments on this floor are unique and one of a kind. Every floor will react differently to this special process and no two boards will be exactly alike.

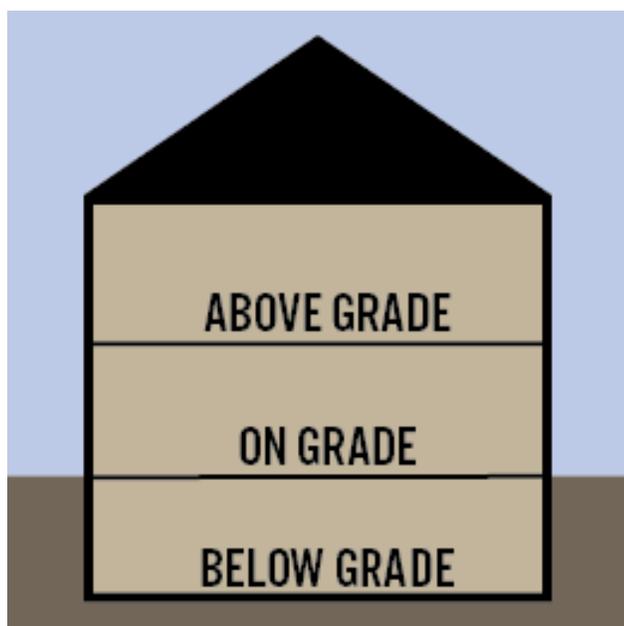
By choosing this color concept, you will have a truly unique floor in your home.

Always approve flooring prior to installation.

stain process to bring attention to the uniqueness of the color. When you look at these samples, you are seeing a color concept that is created through a special process. No two boards will be alike, and colors can vary from lot to lot.

INSTALLATION AREA

It is important to consider what area of the home you are installing flooring in when choosing what type of floor to buy. Manufacturers may specify which areas their flooring is approved for installation. Be sure to follow their recommendations to not void their warranty.



ABOVE GRADE

This is any area that is **above ground level**. For the most part, just about any floor will perform well above grade. This keeps wood flooring away from moisture coming through the ground into the subfloor and ultimately affecting your hardwood floors.

ON GRADE

Most floors will also work when installed on grade or at a level that is the **same as the ground outside**. It is still important to make sure that moisture from the ground does not affect the flooring. This can be done by using moisture barriers or underlayment between the subfloor and your prefinished wood flooring.

BELOW GRADE

Any area that is **below the outside ground level** (even partially) is considered below grade. This includes walk out basements. Extra precautions are needed to ensure that ground moisture does not affect the wood flooring.



Durango “Caramel” from Tradewinds Flooring

Some flooring manufacturers may not recommend their floors to be installed below grade. In addition, some adhesives used to glue wood flooring to the subfloor are not recommended for use below grade.

WALLS & CEILINGS

Many people are choosing to use wood flooring, especially engineered wood flooring, as a wall covering for a specific room or feature wall. This can be a great way to accent a room.

While solid wood flooring may be used, engineered wood floors are thinner and lighter and can be easier to install on a wall or ceiling. Even though these “floors” won’t be walked on, it’s still important to follow the manufacturer’s guidelines for installation and acclimation.

RADIANT HEAT

In some homes, a radiant heating system is used to keep floors warm either as a secondary heat source or as a comfortable

addition to a room, such as a bathroom or kitchen. With certain precautions, some wood floors can be used over radiant heating systems.

Care must be taken that the heat source does not cause the wood flooring to dry out below the manufacturer’s recommended level (typically 35% relative humidity, or 6% moisture content). Any sudden or extreme change in moisture levels can cause flooring to dry out, crack, gap, or in some cases delaminate.

Always read manufacturer’s installation guidelines and warranties to be sure that the flooring you choose and the materials you need to install it are approved for the area you are installing wood floors.

For the floors that we sell, we have installation guides with all of the necessary documents to help you properly install the floor. See them all at

www.themasterscraft.com/installation.

ENGINEERED VS. SOLID

True hardwood floors can either be made from one solid piece of lumber or engineered with a real hardwood veneer on top of a plywood core. While you can get the same beautiful hardwood look from both types, they also have their own benefits.



SOLID WOOD FLOORING

Solid wood floors are made from one solid piece of lumber. Lumber is harvested from trees and is kiln dried to somewhere between 6-9% moisture content. The lumber is then milled with a tongue and groove, resulting in a flooring plank that is usually $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick.

Solid prefinished wood floors are ideal for homes where conditions can get **dry**,

homes with **plywood subfloors**, and for levels that are **on grade** (same level as ground outside) or **above grade** (not basements).

ENGINEERED FLOORING

Recently, engineered prefinished floors have become more popular and the quality of these floors is very good. Instead of using one solid piece of lumber for each plank, lumber is cut into thinner veneers.

These can range from 1.5mm to 4mm thick. Veneers are then bonded with a plywood core. This gives the floor exceptional stability. Engineered floors are available in the following thicknesses: $\frac{3}{8}$ ", $\frac{1}{2}$ ", $\frac{5}{8}$ ", $\frac{9}{16}$ " or $\frac{3}{4}$ ".

It's important to note that engineered wood floors are still true hardwood floors!

Engineered floors are ideal when being installed over **concrete**, in a home that can have **higher moisture content**, or when intending to **glue down or float** the flooring.

Helmsman "Skysail" from Tradewinds

CAN I RE-SAND MY PREFINISHED FLOORING?

Short answer: If you have a solid wood floor, the answer is most likely yes.

As long as the floor has not been sanded too many times before, there should be plenty of wood to re-sand and refinish the floor.

Keep in mind, that sanding a floor will remove all color and texture, but you will have a like-new surface to stain and finish however you like.

If you have an engineered wood floor, the answer depends on the thickness of the top veneer of hardwood. Veneers that are at least 3mm will typically have enough wood to be able to re-sand.

If your floor is too thin to re-sand or you don't want to lose your color and texture, you can fix most scratches and dull finish by re-coating your floor with a new coat of finish.

Each manufacturer may have different requirements on what kind of finish can be used to re-coat the floor. You'll want to work with a professional to re-sand or re-coat your prefinished wood floor.



SPECIES

Wood flooring is a natural forest product. The species of tree that is used for lumber determines the species of your floor.

Every species has its own distinct characteristics and appearance – no two trees are exactly alike. In addition to the width and color of your flooring planks, the species you choose will be one of the main factors in determining how your floor will look.

One consideration is the density (or hardness) of each species, which is measured by a Janka rating. The higher the number, the denser (or harder) the wood is.

Oak, Hickory, Birch, Maple and Walnut are all suitable hardwoods for flooring. Hickory and Northern Maple are considered very hard, while Walnut is on the lower end of the Janka scale. Oak is considered average.

There is no right or wrong choice here. The questions to consider are:

- Will your floor get a lot of **traffic**?
- Will there be a chance **heavy objects** could be dropped or moved on it?
- Is it in a **commercial setting**?

In some of these situations, a denser (harder) species may be advisable.

SPECIES AVAILABLE

Janka rating listed below - in order of softest to hardest



Maple

950



Walnut

1010



Pacific Chestnut

1050

PHOTOSENSITIVITY

Many species of hardwood are photosensitive and will change appearance when exposed to UV light.

Species like Walnut and American Cherry are especially sensitive to color change. Other species like White Oak and Maple are less sensitive.

The reality is that all wood floors will be affected by light over time.

You can slow this process down and make it less noticeable by:

- *Using window treatments* in areas with a lot of direct natural sunlight
- *Rotating furniture and area rugs* to expose the floor uniformly to sunlight

This is a natural process for many hardwood species that will give your floor a rich, unique patina over time.



Birch

1260



Tasmanian Oak

1350



White Oak

1360



European White Oak

1360



Hickory

1820

TEXTURE

Because prefinished floors are manufactured in a factory controlled environment, extra steps can be added to the process to put texture into the flooring boards before they are stained and finished. This can be done through wire brushing, hand scraping, saw marks, or a combination of all.

Mixing textures for a unique look

Creativity knows no bounds when it comes to texture in prefinished flooring. Many prefinished floors today that are brand new can have the look of a 100-year-old reclaimed floor. Something that would otherwise be prohibitively expensive and impossible to find is now readily available as a prefinished hardwood floor.



WIRE BRUSHED

Floors that are wire brushed have a hard metal bristle brush applied to the wood surface to brush out the soft grain. This gives the floor a “weathered” look that adds character to a floor.



Storehouse “Drum” from Real Wood Floors



HAND SCRAPED

Many floors are scraped to add depth and character to the boards. Although prefinished hand scraped floors are manufactured by machines, the scraping gives a rustic look that shows the character of the floor. Hand scraping also works well to hide marks in high traffic areas.



SAW MARKS

Historically, hardwood floors were not able to be sanded as thoroughly as they are today. This left a lot of the original saw marks in the face of the board.

Today, this look has become more popular with the desire for an authentic vintage or reclaimed style. Many manufacturers are choosing to leave in or add saw marks to their prefinished flooring, creating a stunning appearance.



WIDTH

In addition to color and species, one of the most important choices to make when considering an unfinished wood floor is how wide the planks will be.

Unlike the thickness or construction type of the floor, this is a choice you will be reminded of when you or your client look at the floor every day.

Most solid prefinished wood floors are available in 3-1/4" and 5", some will also be available in 2-1/4" or 4".

Engineered prefinished wood floors are typically 5" and wider, up to 8" with some manufacturers having options for even wider planks.

MULTIPLE WIDTHS

Many prefinished flooring manufacturers have multiple width floors. For instance, you could have a floor with 4", 6" and 8" planks in alternating rows.

This multi-width layout is a great design choice and provides a unique look to your floor. It is also eco-friendly because varied board widths use most of the log, leading to less waste.

The choice of your flooring widths is largely a matter of taste and what you want your floor to look like.

One thing to consider when choosing a solid wood floor is that the wider the floor, the more significant the movement of the board can be when it is exposed to either a very dry or very moist environment.

Wider planks can gap more significantly in dry weather, or swell and cup more noticeably in very moist conditions.

For nail down installation of planks that are 5" and wider, we recommend using a glue assist method in addition to the nails to keep the boards from moving as much.



Longhouse Plank “Modling” from Real Wood Floors

WHY IS MY NEW FLOOR SQUEAKING?

Seasonal movement is what often causes squeaks. In most cases it is natural and should be expected in your wood floor.

When the outside climate becomes very cold and dry, we turn on our heaters inside. This heating cycle creates even more dry conditions inside a home.

When the home is very dry, the wood floors also become dry and will shrink. This creates tension in the fasteners, causing them to pull. This movement is what causes squeaks.

After the home returns to a normal humidity level when the heaters are off, the floors will expand back, but will be more loosely held in the subfloor. This loose hold, combined with friction in the flooring, will also cause squeaks between floor boards or within the fastener and subfloor.

This process is reversed in homes where the humidity becomes very high in the summertime. The boards expand, causing stress on fasteners along with the ensuing squeaks.

The solution: Keep the humidity in the home controlled between 35-55% RH and the thermostat at 60-80°. This is the range in which wood flooring is most stable.

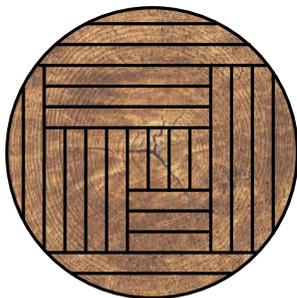
Learn more about how to prevent squeaky floors on our website here.

CUT

There are three primary ways a log can be cut for flooring: plainsawn, rift & quartered, and livesawn.

The way lumber is cut for flooring can have a significant effect on its appearance. Most times, lumber yards and flooring mills are cutting logs for maximum yield. This allows them to use as much of the log for flooring as possible.

PLAINSAWN



PLAIN SAWN

The majority of prefinished flooring is plainsawn because it produces the greatest yield from a log.

Plainsawn wood, also referred to as “flat sawn,” means

the log is cut so the annular growth rings of the tree are 30° or less to the face of the board plank. This results in a “cathedral” grain pattern on the face of the board.

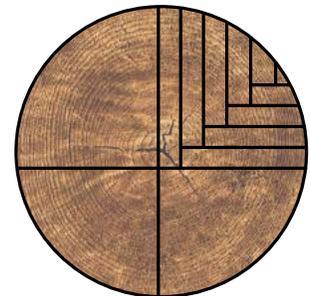
As a premium option, some mills will cut logs in a less efficient way that produces different grain patterns on the face of the board. The two options that can be found in prefinished flooring are “Livesawn” and “Rift & Quartered.”

RIFT & QUARTERED

Quarter Sawn boards are cut with the end grain at a 60-90° angle to the face of the board.

At this angle, the grain appears in very straight lines and the medullary rays in the lumber (lines running through the growth rings in the tree trunk)

are split open to produce a stunning fleck pattern in the face of the board.



RIFT & QUARTERED

Rift Sawn boards are cut so the end grain is at a 45° angle to the face of the board. This produces a beautiful linear grain pattern and is the least efficient (and most expensive) way to cut lumber.



Brick and Board "Solarium" from Real Wood Floors

In prefinished wood flooring, these two cuts are usually combined and sold as "Rift & Quartered" flooring. This is a premium option, and there are only a handful of Rift & Quartered species available as a prefinished wood floor.

The Brick and Board Collection from Real Wood Floors has two colors that are Rift & Quartered – Cupola and Solarium.

LIVE SAWN

Live Sawn lumber is simply cut straight across the log. The resulting planks have

a varied mix of Plainsawn, Rift Sawn and Quarter Sawn grain.

This cut is mostly used in wide plank flooring that is 6" or wider. Livesawn flooring has become increasingly popular and prevalent in prefinished wood flooring, especially in European Oak.



LIVE SAWN

COMPARISONS



Plainsawn



Rift & Quartered



Live Sawn

ENGINEERED VENEERS

The veneers for engineered wood floors can be cut in different ways that affect the appearance of the grain pattern.

Rotary Cut Veneers



Logs can be carefully “peeled” while they rotate to create a long, thin veneer - almost like unrolling a roll of paper towels.

This veneer is then bonded as a sheet to plywood and planks are cut out of the sheet.

A rotary peeled engineered floor is the most economical and eco-friendly of flooring

types because it uses as much of the log as possible. It creates a flat, cathedral grain pattern and is usually 2mm or less in thickness.

Sliced Cut Veneers



Once a tree is cut down, a log can be “squared” and very sharp blades under high pressure can be used to “slice” veneers from the squared log.

Sliced floors keep the natural grain appearance in the floor, and can be cut for plainsawn, livesawn, or rift & quartered grain patterns. The veneers are typically 2-3mm in thickness.

Steadfast “Legacy” from Real Wood Floors

Sawn Cut Veneers



Similar to a sliced veneer, sawn veneers are cut with actual saws and can be made thicker than rotary peeled or sliced veneers (up to 5mm or more).

Sawn cut veneers keep all the natural grain appearance, and can also show characteristics like band saw marks and circle saw marks.

SO, WHICH IS BETTER?

It comes down to look and price.

The way that the veneer is cut will change the look and feel of the floor.

Rotary cut veneers are the most cost-effective. The grain pattern looks marbled and is very distinct.

Sliced and sawn cuts both keep the natural grain appearance of the wood.

Sliced veneers have the traditional oval pattern of the wood and show a lot of grain.

Sawn cut veneers often are the thickest veneers and show many knots and distinct grain patterns. These often have the look of reclaimed wood floors. Most sawn cut floors can also be re-sanded, if needed.

The species will also affect how distinct the grain is in each type of cut.



LIFESTYLE

Wood floors need to be in a consistent environment to perform best, especially when it comes to temperature and humidity.

If a floor gets too dry, gaps can start to appear between boards, checks or cracks can form in the face of your flooring, squeaks and other noises will be more likely. In extreme cases the flooring may become damaged beyond repair.

On the other hand, if flooring takes on too much moisture boards can swell, cup, and even come loose from the subfloor.

Keep the environment in your home consistent within the flooring manufacturer's guidelines to prevent this and help your floor last for many years. Typically, this means keeping your home between 60-80° and 35-55% relative humidity.

Water and wood do not go well together. Be careful about installing wood flooring

where spills are likely, such as near a shower or tub.

TRAFFIC

Another aspect to consider is the type and amount of traffic the room will get.

An entry way, kitchen, living room, or hallway is likely to a lot of foot traffic. You may want to consider a floor that can be re-sanded one day to restore it to new condition.

Most solid prefinished wood floors can be re-sanded multiple times. Re-sanding completely removes all finish, stain and texture and is only done if the wear or damage to a floor is significant. The floor can then be stained and finished to look like new, but typically the texture is lost and you'll end up with a smooth wood floor.

Many engineered wood floors can be re-sanded, depending on the thickness of their wear layer (the top layer of the board that can be re-sanded and refinished). An



Longhouse Plank “Dreghorn” from Real Wood Floors

5 WAYS TO KEEP YOUR FLOORS LIKE NEW

1. Never use water to clean them, only use recommended cleaners and a microfiber mop.
2. Always turn off the beater bar when using your vacuum.
3. Don't walk with cleats or heels on your floor.
4. Invest in a whole home humidifier and keep your home between 35-55% humidity.
5. When moving furniture, pick it up instead of sliding it across the floor.

Bonus: use special wood floor casters on your office chairs to avoid marks.

engineered wood floor should have at least a 3mm wear layer to be considered “re-sandable.”

Another option to renew the appearance of a hardwood floor without sanding it is to “re-coat” the floor. This involves cleaning and buffing the top layer of finish, then applying one or more new coats of finish. This method usually removes most surface scratching and wear without affecting the color or texture of the wood floor.

ACCESSORIES

Prefinished wood floors can really make a room pop, especially when coordinating trim pieces and flooring vents are used.

We offer trim pieces, stair parts and floor vents that are stained to match all of our prefinished wood flooring collections.

We also make stair parts with the same prefinished floor we sell in our showrooms. Learn more about FloorNose at <https://themasterscraft.com/floornose>.



MAINTENANCE

All wood flooring needs to be properly cleaned and maintained for it to last to its full potential. The great thing about prefinished wood flooring is that it is very easy to maintain.

These general tips will help keep your floor in great shape for many years:

- Use **walk off mats** at all entry points to keep dirt and debris from scratching your floor.
- **Wipe up spills** quickly and don't let water sit on the floor.
- **Keep your interior environment consistent**, between 60-80°F and 35-55% relative humidity.
- Use a **microfiber dust mop** to keep the floor clean of dirt and debris.
- Use a recommended **wood floor cleaner and microfiber mop** to clean the floor.
- Use **window treatments** to block UV rays from affecting the coloration of your floor.

WARRANTIES

Another benefit of prefinished wood flooring is that they typically come with a manufacturer's limited warranty.

Prefinished flooring manufacturers can offer a limited warranty because they keep tight control of the manufacturing process. This guarantees that the wood will be structurally sound and the finish will not wear through for a certain number of years.

Some manufacturer's limit their warranty to a period of years (25-50 years is typical), while others choose to offer a lifetime warranty.

Be careful of relying on lifetime warranties as a measure of quality.

A floor that has a lifetime warranty compared to one that has a 50-year warranty is not "twice as good." It means that the manufacturer has built-in plenty of profit margin to cover any rare failures that may occur.



Longhouse Plank "Cumbria" from Real Wood Floors

It is also important to know what is covered, and what is not covered under a limited warranty.

Manufacturers can only warranty what they can control. Everything related to the job site, installation, and cleaning and maintenance **are not** within their control but can have a great effect on the wood flooring.

You can find all our warranty information for our prefinished wood floors at www.themasterscraft.com/installation.

See our [Cleaning and Maintenance Guide](#) for products we recommend and more tips: www.themasterscraft.com/cleaning



The following are some things that are typically NOT covered by manufacturers warranties for prefinished wood floors:

- Squeaks or other noises (these symptoms are nearly always job site related)
- Scratches, dents, and dings and normal wear and tear.
- Damage due to moisture or dry conditions outside of the recommended range
- Damage related to installation
- Significant color variation that is not caught prior to installation (always approve boards before installing them)

WHAT REALLY MATTERS

Despite all these options and variables, what really matters most when choosing a wood floor is your (or your client's) personal taste and preference.

Whether you need an engineered hickory floor or a solid white oak floor, we are your go-to wood flooring resource for anything you need.

We are here to provide you the materials and knowledge you need to do work you are proud of.

For more information, contact us at one of our locations:

www.themasterscraft.com/contact

You can also find all our resources in one spot at:

www.themasterscraft.com/resources