

Robbins®
Canadian Birch™ Strip
Adobe

You know you want it.
What else do you need to know?

Hardwood Flooring Guide



Bruce®
Northshore® Strip
Vintage Brown



THE FIRST STEPS TO HARDWOOD FLOORING

You've already made the most important decision. You want hardwood flooring. Whether building a new home, or tackling a remodeling project, you can be confident that genuine hardwood flooring will add significantly to the beauty, quality and value of your home. It's a smart investment that you will be able to enjoy for a lifetime.

What is hardwood?

The term "hardwood" applies to varieties of wood flooring that are made entirely of wood (not to be confused with laminate, which is actually compressed fiberboard topped with a visual of wood, stone or another design printed on paper). Genuine hardwood is real wood, through and through, providing warmth, character and sophistication to discriminating homeowners. The hardwood family of floors is large and varied. You'll want to be aware of its two distinct forms: Solid and Engineered.

Solid hardwood is just that, 100% solid wood, which is normally nailed or stapled to a wooden subfloor. Most are 3/4" thick, although some manufacturers also offer a "thin-profile" solid that is 5/16" thick. While solid hardwood flooring is typically nailed to a subfloor, thin-profile solid flooring can be glued down over concrete and other hard surfaces.

Engineered hardwood is also 100% wood. It is manufactured by permanently bonding together multiple layers of solid wood in a cross-ply construction. Engineered hardwood, typically 3/8" thick, is designed to have superior strength and moisture/humidity resistance. Other thicknesses are available. Engineered flooring can be installed over wood, concrete or an existing floor. And, just like solid hardwood, most engineered hardwood floors can be refinished if needed.



Which genuine hardwood flooring is right for you depends on where you plan to install the floor; what the subfloor is; the moisture level of the underlying surface; how you want your floor to look; and, of course, your budget.

Where and Why

You'll hear the terms "above grade" and "below grade." "Above grade" means it's installed at or above ground level, and "below grade" describes an area below ground level, such as a basement. Not every kind of hardwood can be used in every location.

Engineered flooring's cross-ply construction enables installation below, on or above grade; even over concrete. It resists expansion and contraction caused by temperature and humidity changes. Engineered flooring is typically glued-down, stapled-down or floated over existing flooring. Some manufacturers offer locking engineered flooring for a floating installation over an existing surface without glue, nails or staples.

Most solid hardwood flooring needs to be nailed to a subfloor and is susceptible to shrinking and expanding from excessive moisture and extreme temperature changes making it unsuitable for installation directly over concrete, and not usually recommended for below grade use. Some manufacturers offer a thin-profile (5/16") solid that can be glued down over concrete. Hardwood flooring is a great choice for just about any room in your home. However, it is not recommended for full baths where frequent tub and shower spills are likely to occur.

And, don't forget the other floors in your home to which the hardwood flooring will connect. Engineered hardwood and thin-profile solid hardwood often allow for a smoother transition to other floors such as vinyl and ceramic. And, these thinner profiles make installation easier under existing moldings and appliances.

	Solid	Thin-Profile Solid	Engineered
Board Thickness	3/4"	5/16"	1/4" - 5/8"
Board Width	Strips & Planks	Strips & Planks	Strips & Planks
Where Installed	On Grade or Above Grade	On Grade or Above Grade	Below Grade, On Grade or Above Grade
Subfloor	Wood	Wood, Concrete or Existing Floor	Wood, Concrete or Existing Floor
How Installed	Nail	Staple or Glue	Glue, Staple ¹ or Float ²

Exceptions may apply. Reference individual specifications and installation instructions. ¹Some widths. ²Some profiles.

Armstrong™ Hardwood Flooring
Oneida™ Strip
Standard



WHICH HARDWOOD TO SELECT

Armstrong™ Hardwood Flooring
Beckford™ Plank 3"
Harvest Oak and Auburn



BEAUTY, CHARM AND CHARACTER

Appearance and Performance

Selecting the perfect hardwood floor for your home is always a matter of personal taste. Trust your instincts as you compare hardwood flooring that offers different appearance and performance characteristics.

Color Color will have an enormous influence on your buying decision. The many colors available are the result of the natural color and graining of the species and the stain applied to the wood. Your home's lighting will also play a role, so be sure to ask your retailer for samples to look at in your home before making your final selection.

HARDNESS	
Brazilian Cherry	HARDEST
Mahogany	
Hickory/Pecan	
Hard Maple	
White Oak	
Ash	
Beech	
Red Oak	
Birch	
Heart Pine	
Walnut	
Teak	
Cherry	
Pine	

Ranked by Janka Hardness Rating

Species The species of wood influences its appearance and durability. Traditional Oak species have pronounced variations in grain and shade that add character; while Maple's wood grain is cleaner and more understated. There are many exotic species available (such as Kambala, Kempas, and Brazilian Cherry) that take their distinctiveness from a combination of origin, color and surface characteristics. Not all species of hardwood are equally hard. If your floor is likely to take a lot of abuse, consider Oak, Maple, or Ash, for extra durability.

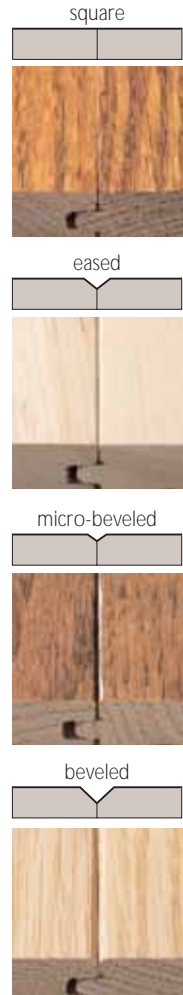
Width Hardwood flooring is commonly described by board width: as Strips (under 3 inches wide) and Planks (3 inches and wider).

The width of individual boards will have a dramatic influence on the final look of the floor. Select the look you like best and that harmonizes with the style and architecture of your home.

Edge Detail The way the edges and ends of boards are cut is called edge detail. There are many edge/end detail options (such as square, beveled and eased). If you are looking for a high-contrast dramatic effect, select a bold edge/end detail that emphasizes the definition of individual boards. Square edges/ends achieve a low-contrast effect by creating a more seamless appearance. The smooth look of square edges/ends is now available in pre-finished as well as unfinished hardwood flooring.

Gloss Since the gloss level of hardwood flooring does not affect its durability or performance, your choice of high gloss or low gloss is a matter of personal preference. However, low gloss floors tend to hide the appearance of minor surface scratches that build up over time.

Style and Texture Whether your taste is rustic, traditional or contemporary, today's hardwood flooring manufacturers offer a wide variety of styles and surface textures to meet your needs. Before making your final selection, explore the many looks available; from sleek, sophisticated contemporary to casual, hand-scraped rustic.





The Finish Line

Hardwood “finish” will play an important role in determining the look, the care and the lasting quality of the hardwood floor you select.

Finish The combination of hardwood's natural durability and today's high-performance urethane finishes means hardwood flooring will stand up to the punishment of active families, and still keep its beauty. Many manufacturers offer extra-tough urethane finishes containing aluminum oxide additives applied at the factory. Urethane-finished floors are significantly easier to care for than the floors of the past that required waxing. And, they maintain their luster for years, without the need for waxing or refinishing.

Pre-Finished vs. Site-Finished If you opt for installing unfinished hardwood flooring, remember that on-site sanding and finishing can result in heavy fumes, messy dust and significant waiting time from when the floor is laid until it can be enjoyed. Urethane finishes applied on-site are not as tough and long lasting as factory-applied finishes. And that's why hardwood flooring manufacturers don't guarantee site-applied finishes. Labor costs for on-site finishing may also drive up your installation cost.

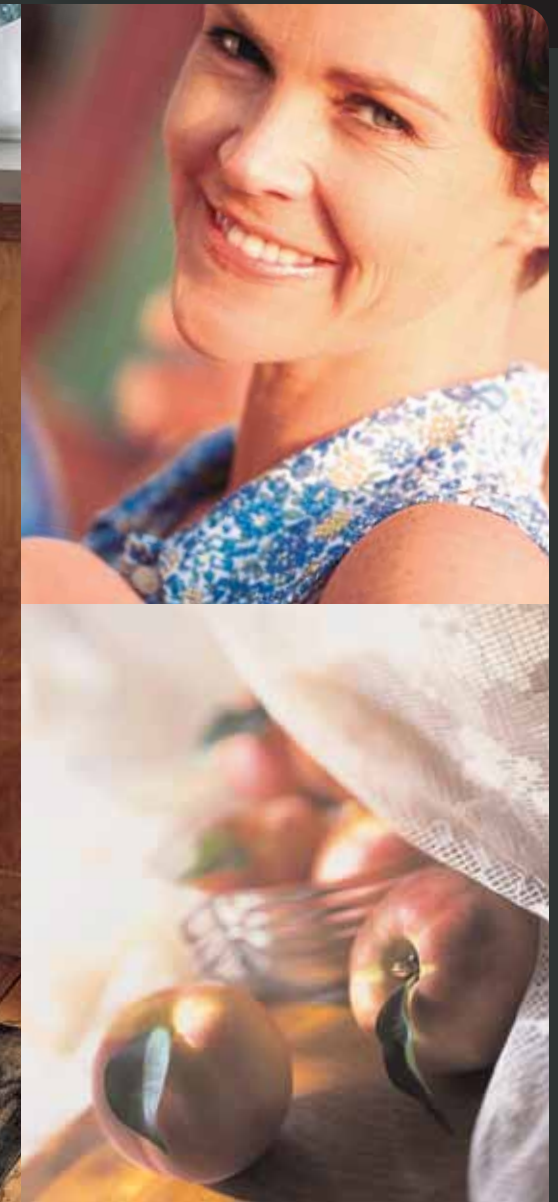
Factory pre-finished hardwood flooring is easier to install and it performs better over time. In order to produce the highest quality hardwood flooring, stains and finish coatings are applied and dried in a controlled factory environment using specialized equipment not available for on-site finishing. High-performance aluminum oxide urethane coatings get as many as seven passes of ultra violet light to cure the urethane to the wood, creating an extremely durable finish.

With all the color choices available in pre-finished flooring today, there should be no need to stain and finish new hardwood flooring in your home.

Armstrong™ Hardwood Flooring
Valenza™ Collection
Jatoba



A LIFETIME OF ENJOYMENT



Armstrong™ Hardwood Flooring
Kingsford™ Solid Strip
Canyon



Here is a little more food for thought to help you feel 100% confident about your 100% genuine hardwood flooring purchase.

Warranty Most pre-finished hardwood flooring will have a residential finish warranty that ranges from 10 years to 25 years, as well as a lifetime structural-integrity warranty. Compare warranties as you shop, and ask the retailer for a copy of the warranty for the hardwood flooring you select.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

Price Advances in technology have made it possible for some manufacturers to deliver attractive, high-performance hardwood flooring with longer warranties and at lower-than-expected prices. When shopping, be aware that you generally get what you pay for in genuine hardwood flooring. Price, brand name and length of warranty are strong indicators of quality and reliability.

Maintenance Retire your water bucket and your floor wax. Today's hardwood floors neither need nor benefit from either one. Sweep or dust mop once a week using soft fabrics like cotton and terry cloth. Use a felt or soft-brush head on your vacuum's wand attachment. Clean up spills and tracked in dirt immediately. For periodic touch ups, use a no-wax floor cleaner – see manufacturer's recommendations.





quarter round



reducer strip



stair nose



t-molding



threshold

Purchase and Installation Hardwood flooring is sold by the square foot. To estimate how much flooring to buy, multiply the room's length by its width. Divide odd-shaped rooms into rectangles and add their areas together. It's a good idea to add approximately 10% to your measured square footage to provide for cutting and trimming.

To ensure your satisfaction with a quality job, most specialty stores and home improvement centers can install the hardwood flooring they sell. Some have manufacturer-certified installers. If you elect to hire an independent installer, inquire as to whether the installer is certified and then check references. Insist that your floor be installed according to the manufacturer's instructions. And, if you have the required time, talent, tools and temperament you may want to install it yourself, saving money and earning bragging rights.

Trim and Moldings Coordinated hardwood trim and moldings are available from quality hardwood flooring manufacturers to add the finishing touch. Make sure your installation estimate includes the materials and labor costs for all needed trim and moldings – such as quarter-round moldings where the floor meets the baseboard, end moldings at sliding glass doors or toe kicks, reducer strips that transition to adjoining floors, and nose moldings on stair treads.

Bruce®
Natural Choice™
Cherry finish



Robbins®
Warren™ Plank
Chaps



MAKING YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE

Design Tips:

- Light-colored floors tend to make a room appear brighter and larger. Dark-colored floors may create a more dramatic environment.
- Go against the grain; don't feel your floor has to match the species and graining of your furniture or cabinets. The interplay of different woods can add visual interest and personality to your room.
- Narrow-width strips can add length to a "boxy" room. Installing a floor with the boards running across a narrow room, or on a diagonal, can create a more spacious appearance.
- Wide-width planks work well and may be more scale-appropriate in mid-size and larger rooms.
- Beveled-edge details, light colors, bold graining, random-width planks, surface irregularities and low-gloss finish make a room appear less formal, without diminishing overall beauty or sophistication.
- Using the same hardwood flooring from room to room makes the home look bigger and creates a pleasing visual continuity.
- Quality area rugs can enhance the drama of your hardwood floors, create personal statements and help to define spaces. Be sure the rug has a soft, non-abrasive back or use a "breathable" under-pad to protect the floor.
- Seeing is believing. Go to www.armstrong.com to purchase and download the "Design My RoomSM" CD. Then, simply shoot a digital photo of your room, outline the floor with the mouse, and "try on" various hardwood floors to see how they look in your room.



Assemble an "Idea Book"

A good ally in helping you select the right hardwood floor for your home is an "idea book." You can get interesting design ideas by looking up manufacturers' web sites and cutting out photos from magazines. Put them in a folder or binder and show your idea book to flooring professionals to help them understand the final effect you want to achieve. Take the time and do your homework because a well-selected, well-installed hardwood floor will not only make your dream come true, but will also add substantially to the value of your home.

Bruce®
Dundee™ Strip
Butterscotch

Additional resources

National Wood Flooring Association
nwfa.org

Hardwood Council
hardwoodcouncil.com

NOFMA
nofma.org

Armstrong™ Hardwood Flooring Company
armstrong.com

Bruce® Hardwood Floors
bruce.com

Robbins® Fine Hardwood Flooring
robbins.com

“Design My RoomSM”
armstrong.com

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