

Consumer Guide to **Timber Flooring**



**Buying, renovating
or maintaining a
timber floor or deck?**

All the advice you need
from Australia's peak
industry association.

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Australian timber flooring association

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What you need to consider in choosing a timber floor for your home



Once you have ascertained the environmental conditions for the floor, you will need to consider the look of the floor. This is not as simple as picking a timber species, it involves five key and interrelated points:

1. Flooring product
2. Board colour/ species of the timber
3. Grade/ feature content of the timber
4. Hardness rating of the timber
5. Selection of board width

1. Selecting your 'flooring product'

There are several types of 'timber flooring product' each of which have their own characteristics and attributes. The main options are:

- Solid strip timber flooring
- Engineered flooring
- Prefinished solid
- Parquetry

There are also a series of related products, namely:

- Laminate flooring
- Cork
- Bamboo

The following section provides guidance on the various flooring options, their characteristics and application.

Timber Flooring

Solid strip timber flooring (sometimes referred to as 'tongue and groove') is fixed to sheet subfloors of particleboard or plywood over joists or battens or direct onto a concrete slab. The traditional timber floor is renowned for its strength, durability and character. Throughout its life, solid strip timber flooring can be rejuvenated to near new condition by sanding and re-finishing. It is ideal for new houses or to match existing floors in renovations and can be top (face) nailed, secretly fixed or glued to concrete slabs.

Engineered flooring is manufactured with a decorative layer of timber bonded over layers of other timber beneath. This not only provides some additional stability but also maintains all the appearance and characteristics associated with solid timber flooring.



Solid timber flooring



Engineered flooring

How to maintain your timber floor

Timber floors vary in ease of maintenance depending on the type of coating used and the traffic/usage of the floor. Regular care will greatly enhance both the appearance of your floor and its lifespan.

At some stage, the floor will need to be rejuvenated which typically involves buffing back and re-coating. Some of the softer floor finishes can also benefit from application of metallised polish which provides an additional wear surface.

It is important that maintenance requirements are understood by customers to ensure ongoing satisfaction – make sure your upfront conversations with your flooring contractor are not just about installation of a timber floor but extend to how you need to maintain the floor in the short and long term.

A newly finished floor

Although a floor may be walked on after initial curing, some precautions are necessary with a newly finished floor until the coating system has fully hardened and this may take in the order of two weeks.

Use of the floor before the full cure has been realised can result in increased tendency for scuffing and scratching. It is recommended that rugs are not laid until after the floor finish has fully hardened. Rugs with rubber backings should never be used as these may tend to stain the applied coatings.

While light furniture can be replaced and used during this period, attach furniture protection felt pads to the feet of tables and chairs. Heavy items such as fridges should be moved carefully into position and at no time should they be dragged over either newly finished or fully cured floors. Consideration should also be given to chairs with castors as they can indent softer timbers and also cause premature wear of the coatings. Again these should not be used until the finish has hardened and barrel type castors are less likely to damage a floor than ball castors.

Ongoing care and maintenance

Ingress of grit and direct sunlight

Traditional enemies of timber floor finishes are the sand and grit brought into the house with footwear. These small particles act like sandpaper resulting in scratches in the floor. Mats placed both outside and inside external doors provide a simple and effective means of significantly reducing grit from entering the house. Similarly, in high wear areas, runners and rugs can be effective and can also add to the décor of the house. The kitchen floor generally experiences high wear and therefore a floor rug in this area can be particularly beneficial.

Another aspect that should be considered is the amount of direct sunlight on floors. Direct intense sunlight can contribute to gapping and possible cupping of boards. It will also cause the colour of both boards and finish to change with time. Some floor finishes are more prone to darken with age and direct sunlight accelerates this process. Filtered sunlight through sheer curtains or blinds provides an effective means of



Do not use rubber mats