

Hardwood Expectations

You can expect that a hardwood floor is

- **Beautiful:** Currently, hardwood flooring is the number one choice in rooms most desired to show the individual design choices and character of those that own it. Hardwood flooring is one of the few flooring choices that continue to be manufactured as a product of nature. It is said that it is the only flooring choice that evokes an emotion.
- **Affordable:** According to life cycle costing, hardwood flooring rates at the top for value over time. Made to last a lifetime, replacement is not necessary, therefore the overall cost and resale value outweighs all other flooring products.
- **Easy to Maintain:** Routine maintenance is little more than simple sweeping, vacuuming and periodic cleaning with your manufacture recommended hardwood floor cleaner. (improper cleaning products may react with your finish and void your warranty) Preventive maintenance such as; area rugs, floor protectors (fitted on the bottom of all furniture placed on hardwood surfaces) are essential in extending the performance of your hardwood floor.
- **Ecologically Sound:** Unlike most floor coverings, wood floors come from a natural resource that is sustainable. Long gone are the days when timber was cut down with little thought for the long term consequences on our forests. Today, most timber is cut from forests that are carefully managed to ensure continued resources in the future. In fact, according to U.S. Forest Service statistics, almost twice as much hardwood timber is planted every year through new growth as is harvested. Additionally, there is more standing hardwood timber today than there was 50 years ago.
- **Healthy:** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has stated that indoor air quality is one of our top health threats. Installed in the home or elsewhere, wood floors help contribute to a healthy living environment. Hard surface flooring such as hardwood floors do not harbor dust mites or molds. This creates cleaner air quality for all inhabitants; especially the estimated 35 million North Americans who suffer allergies. The hard surface of wood assists in preventing artificial substances such as pesticides that can accumulate in or on other floor coverings. A recent EPA study found that pesticides used in gardens and homes accumulate on floors and other surfaces in the home, however wood floors greatly reduce the accumulation of such toxins. Another concern for the home environment is the off-gassing of toxins that results from synthetic materials. Any of these chemicals at high levels may contribute to people in the home becoming chronically ill.
- Your floor will be as level and sound as the sub-floor under it.

You should NOT expect

- **A table top finish.** Each piece of hardwood flooring show variance depending on its grain configuration, natural mineral streaks, allowable knots, lighting, stain absorbance, and gloss levels. For these reasons it is not expected that a swatch or small sample (15" x 15") will show all the natural character in hardwood floors. Exotic species especially should be seen with a carton laid out to ensure variances are acceptable.
- **A scratch free finish.** As innovative as finishing manufacturing companies have become, flooring scratches are inevitable. There are products that do a great job at masking scratches depending on their severity; these products can often be purchased through the retailer you purchase your floors from. Protecting your floors is the best defense; walk off mats at door entrances and in high risk areas (kitchen sink or food prep area) and of course pads under all furniture at points touching your flooring. Regular maintenance will help reduce surface scratches.
- **A monochromatic floor.** Most purchasers' desire hardwood for its natural characteristics, this should be expected with hardwood. How much variance is mentioned in "A table top surface" above. Your expectations should be discussed with your professional sales person prior to purchasing.
- **A floor that will not indent.** In spite of the word "hardwood" hardwood flooring will indent under high heel traffic or other forms of abuse such as unprotected furniture legs or outdoor shoes.
- **A floor without cracks between the boards.** Solid hardwood floors will expand and contract within seasonal changes, this means we can expect to see periodic gapping during winter months when humidity may be less with doors and windows closed up along with internal heat systems consistently on. These gaps will generally close up again as more humidity enters our home through spring and summer. It is important that the humidity in your home is maintained at 30 – 50% throughout the year to ensure the integrity of your hardwood. It is a good idea to install a hygrometer in your home to periodically check your humidity; depending on your geographical area you may require a humidifier or de-humidifier. Engineered hardwood floors are much more dimensionally stable by design yet will continue to perform best in a controlled humidity of 30 – 50%.
- **A squeak free floor.** Although not always common, squeaks may come and go as a result of humidity or subfloor changes. Many subfloors are constructed of wood and will be vulnerable to changes, shifting and settling. Squeaks are an acceptable part of hardwood and should not be considered a product defect. If the squeaks are questionable in your home, contact your retailer to have your floor assessed.
- **Trim pieces and moldings may not match perfectly with your flooring.** As trims / moldings are also a part of nature and will show variance, do not expect an exact match. For best results, select a board to be coordinated beside the molding (s) prior to the installation of the flooring. This would require removing the moldings from their box and plastic wrap (if applicable) the day the flooring goes to the jobsite for conditioning (acclimation). If the moldings are not acceptable, this allows time for replacement in a better time frame.