

What You Should Know About Your New Wood Floor

Introduction

Now that your floors are installed, it is important to understand that a wood floor is an investment in your home which **you must care for properly** if you want to enjoy it for years to come. Following these guidelines will ensure that your floor keeps looking as beautiful as it did when it was first installed.

Tradespersons/Ongoing Work

If you plan on having other work performed after your floor has been finished, it is **your responsibility** to ensure that your floor is protected from scratches, gouges, marks, scuffs or other damage that is the result of work being performed in your building. The flooring installer cannot be held accountable for careless damage and any necessary repairs will be an extra charge. Remember that all wood, even hardwoods, can be scratched or dented.



We recommend that your entire floor be completely covered with grey building paper, followed by a layer of hardboard (also known as high-density fibreboard) such as the type used to build inexpensive knockdown furniture. All seams should be taped properly and make sure the entire floor is covered. Any exposed floor or open seams could allow sand or other grit underneath which will abrade the floor finish and cause serious damage.



In addition, all tradespersons or other individuals should be aware that muddy boots shall not be worn in the building. Rivets or metal eyelets on boots, jeans or other clothing can cause serious damage when kneeling or working on top of wood flooring. Do not assume your contractor will know this!

All tradespersons shall also be aware that any tools such as workmates, benches, stepladders, scaffolding, etc, can mark or 'stamp' permanent damage into softwood or hardwood flooring that may be impossible to repair. In one instance, a contractor used a step stool that was missing rubber feet and pressed deep circles into a softwood floor that were too deep to sand out.



Kitchen installers should avoid dragging or sliding cabinets into place during installation. You must assume that common sense may not prevail!

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If you plan on having appliances or electronics delivered, make sure the delivery people follow these guidelines as well, and ensure that they are using appropriate precautions.

Building Environmental Conditions

Every homeowner has their own preferences when it comes to temperature and humidity, but it is important to realize that seasonal changes must be taken into consideration in order to keep your floor looking great.

All wood flooring is prone to expansion and contraction due to changes in ambient temperature and humidity. Your flooring is dried during the manufacturing process from green lumber (approximately 30 percent moisture content) to a moisture content of 6 to 8 percent. Wood is like a sponge; it easily absorbs moisture from the air, and is able to dry just as easily. For this reason, the flooring installer checks the conditions of your building before material is brought on site to ensure that the building is suitable for flooring. Your general contractor may tell you that your building is ready for flooring, but ultimately it is the flooring contractor who has the experience to make that decision.

Generally speaking, wood floors tend to dry out and show gaps during the cold winter months, because the air is dry, while in spring and summer, they swell up tight due to the humid air.

Your floor is installed using a specially-engineered adhesive which allows the boards to expand and contract with changes in seasonal temperature and humidity. It is completely normal to notice slight gaps between boards or sometimes, to see no gaps at all. This is a natural and unavoidable part of real wood flooring, particularly in wide plank floors.

There are many other factors that can have an effect on this as well, such as:

- Do you live in a particularly damp location, such as waterfront property?
- Do you use the building seasonally, or year-round?
- Do you often open the windows during the warm season?
- Does your building have an HRV (heat recovery ventilator) system?
- Are you installing flooring over an unfinished crawlspace or damp basement?
- Do you have a wood burning fireplace or in-floor radiant heat? Do you have air conditioning?
- Did you just paint and/or finish the drywall? (Paint and drywall spackle continues to release moisture for weeks)
- Species of wood (some are more stable than others)

As a general rule of thumb, it is important to make sure that your building is maintaining a **temperature of between 68 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit (20 to 22 Celsius)** and a **relative humidity of 38 to 45 percent** before, during, and after your floor is installed. We recommend the purchase of an inexpensive, digital hygrometer to accurately measure temperature and humidity.

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68 to 72 F
20 to 22 C
38 to 45 RH



Many people believe that once the floor is down, it's not going anywhere. This could not be further from the truth. Failure to maintain proper conditions could cause the floor to develop unnaturally large gaps. Worse yet, a building environment that is too damp could cause the floor to swell to the point of cupping or buckling, causing an undesirable 'washboard' effect (see image). In extreme cases, swelling 'squashes' the wood cells, and when they dry again, they never return to their original state.



Regular Floor Care and Cleaning

When it's time to clean, there are many products available in stores that are specifically designed for washing wood floors. Follow these tips to keep your floor clean without causing damage:

- Make your own safe, effective floor cleaner by mixing a bucket of warm water with 1 cup of vinegar and a few drops of dish soap to break the surface tension. Dampen, but **do not soak**, your mop or rag. For best results, wipe the entire floor by hand in a consistent S-pattern, and then go back and wipe the floor again with a clean, dry cloth.
- Some vacuum cleaners may damage your floor by holding pieces of dirt or sand on the wheels and marking the finish. Use care when vacuuming. Try using a microfiber dust mop instead.
- Dirt and sand can act like sandpaper, scratching and damaging your floor's finish. Use rugs near entryways to trap dirt and keep it off your floors. Consider alternate floor coverings such as tile or slate near entryways.
- Standing water can penetrate and warp a wood floor. **Never** soak the floor with water, instead use dampened mops or clothes, or wipe up spills and messes as they happen.
- Avoid oil soaps such as Murphy and **never use cleaners or products that contain a coating or wax** such as Mop & Glo or Future. These products discolour the finish and create a build up that will be problematic when it comes time to apply a maintenance



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coat of finish. Rather than buffing and recoating, you may find yourself requiring a complete refinishing.

Moving In and Furniture

When you are ready to move into your home or cottage, you should be prepared to think about where you are going to place your furniture and belongings, and protect your floor by using protective felt pads (nail-on type is best) on table and chair legs, couches, pianos, chests, etc. Also, always avoid dragging or sliding objects across the floor. Instead, lift them and set them in place.



Again, if you plan on having furniture, appliances or electronics delivered, make sure the delivery people are using appropriate moving equipment and precautions, and hold them responsible for any damages.

Maintenance Down the Road

All wood floors require periodic maintenance to ensure that they last as long as your home. This usually involves having the floor 'buffed' or lightly sanded with a fine grit screen and recoated. Depending on the type of floor and how it is cared for, you may require this treatment between every 4 to 10 years. Many people wait far too long to have this maintenance work done, but often times they cost themselves more money in the long run because a complete resanding and refinishing must be done.

The wise homeowner will have this work done when the floor starts to show consistent scratching or scuffing in the finish over any high traffic areas, and before the finish has worn off completely. If you start to see greyish black areas, you have waited far too long and should call a floor finisher as soon as possible.



In addition, the degree of denting and marks and the depth of this damage will determine whether a floor must be sanded thoroughly or simply buffed and recoated. You can save yourself time and money by following this guide before it is time for maintenance.

Enjoy Your Floor!

We hope you enjoy the natural beauty of your new wood floor. Please [contact us](#) if you have any questions about this guide.