

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CHOOSING

The perfect wood flooring



forté



About this guide

Combining sophistication with functionality wood flooring can elevate your space and provide a lasting foundation. Whether you're working on a new project or updating an existing one, follow these practical tips to find a wood flooring product you can trust.

No matter what interior style you prefer or the type of space you are designing, this guide contains all the advice you need to choose the right wood flooring.

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Types of wood flooring

Timber flooring is known for its warmth and distinct character but it also offers durability, longevity and easy maintenance. The key is knowing which type of wood flooring to choose.

In this section, we explore the key types of wood flooring and the pros and cons of each:

SOLID HARDWOOD FLOORS	→
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PARQUET FLOORS	→
LAMINATE FLOORS	→





Solid Wood Flooring

Consisting of 100% solid wood, hardwood flooring has been a popular choice for centuries. Its durability, colour and grain variations give it a timeless look and it can be re-sanded several times during its lifetime.

For best results, it should be laid on a flat subfloor or on bearers or joists. It also requires a two to three-week acclimatisation period before installation to ensure the wood adapts to its new environment and doesn't warp.

Since each plank consists of more timber than the other options listed in this guide, solid hardwood planks are also much more expensive.

PROS AND CONS OF SOLID HARDWOOD FLOORS

Pros

- Unique character that adds value to the property
- Lasts for decades
- Can be refinished multiple times

Cons

- Requires professional installation
- Long acclimatisation period
- Expensive
- Needs regular maintenance
- Requires a flat subfloor or bearers or joists
- Susceptible to water damage (as with the other options listed in this guide)
- Not sustainable (uses 3 times the amount of precious hardwood than engineered wood)
- Prone to movement that causes shrinkage and cupping (particularly in wider planks or in extreme climates)



Engineered Wood Flooring

Made with a real wood veneer laid on reinforced plywood, engineered hardwood is a cost-effective alternative to solid wood. The timber veneer provides the same authentic style and durability and stability as solid timber but with increased strength and longevity due to the multiple layers.

Engineered timber flooring can be installed on any flat surface to ensure stability. It can also be delivered as prefinished boards to reduce installation time and costs. Over its lifetime, the veneer can be re-sanded and refinished up to five times depending on veneer thickness.

Since engineered timber flooring uses less natural slow-growing hardwood than solid wood and the backing is made from faster-growing, readily available materials, it is more sustainable than solid timber flooring, resulting in a smaller environmental impact.

PROS AND CONS OF ENGINEERED WOOD FLOORS

Pros

- Suitable for residential and commercial spaces
- Adds value to the property
- Cost-effective
- Prefinished for quick installation
- Can be installed on flat surfaces without nails or glue
- Compatible with existing tiles
- Available in a range of thicknesses
- Durable and stable
- Available in wider planks than solid wood due to its stability
- Withstands water damage better than solid wood due to its multilayer construction

Cons

- Susceptible to water damage (as with the other options listed in this guide)



Parquet Flooring

Parquet floors consist of multiple small pieces of wood laid in a geometric pattern on top of a solid base. This gives distinctive character and interest to a space, but can be expensive and time-consuming to install.

Parquet flooring is available in various timbers and layouts, making it easy to tailor them to match your interior style. However, the pattern may wear out over time and become distorted.

PROS AND CONS OF PARQUET FLOORS

Pros

- Unique aesthetic
- Made of hardwood or engineered timber
- Glued down to timber or level concrete slabs

Cons

- Intricate installation
- Expensive
- High maintenance
- Susceptible to water damage (as with the other options listed in this guide)



Laminate Flooring

While it isn't real wood, laminate flooring is an alternative for those who want to achieve the wood appearance at a lower price point. Laminate is a synthetic material made of multiple layers fused together. The fibreboard base is topped with a photographic applique layer designed to mimic real wood and sealed with clear resin.

PROS AND CONS OF LAMINATE FLOORS

Pros

- Affordable
- Very hardwearing to scratches and general wear and tear

Cons

- Repetitive and cheap appearance
- Poor sound and feel when walked on
- Short lifespan
- Made from synthetic materials
- Cannot be resanded and refinished over time like engineered timber
- Very sensitive to water and moisture damage if the core is exposed, causing permanent damage (as with the other options listed in this guide)
- Does not add value to a property

Unfinished vs Prefinished Flooring

Another core consideration when choosing wood flooring is whether to opt for unfinished or prefinished planks.

UNFINISHED WOOD FLOORING

Traditionally, wood flooring was raw and unfinished, and then sanded and stained on-site. The planks are supplied as raw, uncoated hardwood, secured to the subfloor, and then sanded, stained and sealed.

The amount of site work required for unfinished flooring can cause costly problems. For example, sanding dust could settle on the coating before it's fully dry or the sander could leave unwanted marks. Or, because the stain is applied and dried on-site, the colour may look different than you expected.

To resolve these problems, you will need to re-sand and recoat the planks. This increases the installation cost and also reduces the lifespan of the floor.

- Sanded and sealed after installation
- Requires days of site work- an unfinished solid timber floor takes 3 times longer to install than a prefinished engineered timber floor
- Filled seams
- Difficult to source
- Messy installation
- Colour can differ when finished on site due to uncontrolled conditions such as humidity or uneven thicknesses of coats applied

PREFINISHED WOOD FLOORING

Prefinished floors have since become popular because they reduce installation time. The planks are sanded, stained, and sealed in the factory, meaning the only site work required is securing them to the subfloor. Factory operations also mean that the finish is consistent every time.

- Sanded and sealed in the factory
- Requires less site work
- No seal between planks unless glued down
- Easy to source from any supplier
- Factory finishes perform better than site applied finishes due to technique, finishing technology and UV lights

BENEFITS OF PREFINISHED WOOD FLOORING

Consistent

Unlike unfinished flooring, the finish and quality of prefinished flooring are dependable because it is manufactured in controlled factory conditions. There are strict quality control processes in place so you can be confident that each board is built to last.

At Forté, what you see is what you get. Simply choose your favourite style from our wide range of colours and we'll work closely with the factory to ensure the final colour is exactly what you ordered. If you can't find your dream style on our website, we can also order custom colours to suit your space.

Durable and low maintenance

In the factory, a protective UV-cured coating is put on after the stain is applied. This is much more durable than sealants that are applied on-site and it extends the floor's lifespan significantly.

Forté floor sealers are also resistant to stains, moisture and discolourations, so the wood does not need to be re-sanded as often. This makes it easier to maintain and means you can enjoy the floor for longer.

Efficient installation

Prefinished floors are quick and easy to install, and don't require an acclimatisation period. Since all the sanding, colouring, and coatings are done in advance, the only site work required is to secure the planks to the subfloor. This also means there's far less mess so, once the floor is laid, it can be walked on almost immediately.

Cost-effective

Prefinished wood flooring typically costs less than unfinished flooring once you factor in site work. Even if the upfront cost of the factory-finished planks is higher, the time saved during installation results in significant savings.

No fumes

Unlike site-finished boards, the coatings on prefinished wood floors are cured in the factory. This means all the fumes and chemicals are gone well before they're delivered, making the room safe to occupy on the same day the floor gets installed.



Suitable environments for wood flooring

While you may be tempted to install engineered wood flooring in every room of the house, they aren’t suited to rooms with excess moisture. For example, a bathroom with a shower or bath. However, provided it is looked after, hardwood flooring will last for years to come in the following environments:



Corridors and entranceways

Engineered wood floors make a great first impression and provide a practical, easy-to-clean surface for busy thoroughfares. For best results, place a doormat at the door and limit shoes inside.

Living room

Engineered wood flooring creates a cosy look and feel. When paired with soft upholstery, rugs, and drapes, the smooth timber adds a beautiful textural contrast.

Dining room

Wood flooring provides a practical base for a dining room as it’s easy to

clean and move chairs in and out from the table. You can also find a style to suit your design preferences, whether you prefer a formal space or a casual family atmosphere.

Kitchen

Hardwood flooring is a great foundation for a kitchen, providing warmth and character. It’s easy to clean and, as long as you wipe up spills quickly, it will last for decades.

Bedrooms

Hardwood flooring provides a more hygienic flooring surface when used in bedrooms, especially for those who have allergies to dust or animal fur.

How to choose wood flooring

Comparing different flooring products is a daunting task, especially when they all come in different specifications and with different qualities. To be confident that your wood flooring is suited to your needs, budget, and tastes, consider the following factors:

WARRANTY AND SUPPORT

New flooring is a significant investment and, if issues arise during installation, reliable support is crucial. When buying from cheap or overseas suppliers, make sure to ask if they stand by their product and are prepared to fix any problems that may crop up. Here at Forté, we conduct thorough testing and quality control to ensure superior planks are delivered every time. We provide comprehensive support, including a 25-year structural warranty and repairs for faulty coatings.

CLIMATE CONDITIONS

From the humid subtropics to the snowy alpine regions, New Zealand is home to a variety of climate conditions. This can have a significant impact on the longevity of your wood flooring, so you need to choose a supplier that considers the moisture level, veneer thickness and most effective protective coatings. All Forté flooring has been designed specifically for New Zealand, with special consideration for our changeable weather. We have tested every element, including the colour of the knot filler and the percentage of short lengths.

SUSTAINABILITY

When choosing your wood flooring, think about the environmental impact it can have. Firstly, choose a supplier that sources timber legally and from a managed forest. Secondly, choose engineered wood because it uses less slow-growing hardwood compared to solid wood of the same size.

VENEER THICKNESS

Most engineered wood flooring has between a 2mm and 6mm veneer of real wood, backed with a multilayer core to keep it stable. If the veneer is too thin, it cannot be re-sanded. The most common veneer thickness is 4mm, which is thick enough for up to 3 re-sands in its lifespan.

WIDTH AND LENGTH OF THE PLANK

For engineered wood flooring planks, the standard width is 190mm and the standard length is approximately 2.2m. These dimensions are easy to ship and allow an affordable price. Since engineered flooring comes with a tongue and groove or locking joining profile, longer and wider wooden planks will cost more. That’s because the tree must be older, larger, and have fewer imperfections.

GRADE

Timber flooring comes in various grades such as prime, light feature, feature and rustic. This refers to the number of knots and character present in the planks and can significantly change the look of a home.

For a cleaner more modern look, opt for a prime grade timber floor, if you’d like the floor to have a rustic charm with various knots, cracks and character, a feature or rustic grade would be more suitable.

STAIN COLOUR

It’s common to have seven or more layers of coating consisting of primers, pore fillers, base coats, and top coats. It can also take multiple layers of coloured stain to achieve your desired look. Generally, the more complex the colour, the more layers of stain are required.

PROTECTIVE COATINGS

The protective coating is the first line of defence against damage and moisture. Generally, the more coats, the better protected your floor is from scratching and staining. The main coatings used in New Zealand are polyurethane, lacquer, and hard wax oil. Most Forté flooring is coated with a low VOC water-based polyurethane that looks like natural oil but provides extra durability and better water resistance.

INSTALLATION METHODS

Floating floors

With floating floors, the individual planks interlock edge-to-edge to form a unified surface resting on the subfloor. This means it cannot be re-sanded or have cabinetry installed on top, and is prone to making noise underfoot.

Glue-down installation

On the other hand, glue-down installation is when the planks are secured directly to the subfloor with an adhesive. This gives a firm hold, keeps noise to a minimum, creates a solid feeling underfoot, and is able to hold the weight of kitchen cabinetry. It can also be re-sanded multiple times, giving it a lifespan of 30 – 50 years.

THE COST OF ENGINEERED WOOD FLOORING

The average supply cost for a premium engineered wood floor in New Zealand is around \$210 per m2. For installation, the cost ranges from \$75 to \$350 per m2. For example, when supplied and installed by an experienced contractor, 100m2 of premium timber flooring will cost an average of \$28,500 - \$35,000, including GST.

Key factors that influence the price are warranties, wood grade, sustainability, veneer thickness, stain colour, durability, installation technique, and the integrity of the base layers. Plus, you should always make sure it is designed for New Zealand climates. If the cost is low, it is likely a reflection of quality.

Forté engineered wood flooring

At Forté, we care about providing exceptional timber flooring to help you create memorable, enduring spaces. We're committed to environmental responsibility, quality craftsmanship, and the highest level of service.



SUSTAINABLY SOURCED



LOW IN FORMALDEHYDE



DESIGNED FOR NEW ZEALAND CLIMATES AND LIFESTYLES



SUBJECT TO STRICT QUALITY CONTROLS



PREFINISHED WITH A DURABLE FINISH



SUITED TO GLUE-DOWN INSTALLATION

Forté wood floors provide a foundation for attractive and long-lasting interiors. Our flooring has been engineered for ultimate stability and compatibility with the New Zealand climate, ensuring it can be enjoyed for several generations. It also reduces environmental waste as it only uses a third of the amount of slow-growing hardwood.

Engineered wood flooring is superior in quality, aesthetics, durability, sound, and insulation. By choosing a Forté floor, you'll also gain access to our nationwide network of approved craftspeople for installation.



BROWSE OUR RANGE OF ENGINEERED HARDWOOD FLOORING

If you're ready to transform your interior space, explore our flooring range today. Click here to get your copy of our [full product catalogue](#) and once you find something you like, we can send you a [box of samples](#) to experiment with.

EXPLORE OUR FLOORING RANGE

Contact us

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