

How To Protect Yourself When Buying A Wood Floor

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Regardless of where you purchase or what you purchase you should always get the most value for the cost. As there are different manufacturers of automobiles, we have even more in wood flooring and it becomes confusing and frustrating.

1. Legitimate Manufacturer? Insure the source you are purchasing from is not simply a broker or a box store that sells everything including flowers. No one person or company can be an expert at everything and although the price may seem attractive, the end result could be quite unpleasant. If you looking at purchasing direct from a Wood Flooring manufacturer then make sure they are a manufacturer by checking with the National Wood flooring Association in St Louis. You can go to their web site www.nwfa.org or call toll free 1-800-422-4556 and verify.
2. Grading - There are officially four grades in wood flooring and here they are from the best down to the lowest; Clear, Select and Better, Number One and finally Number Two. Clear is the best selection Mother Nature has to offer with that specie and as you move toward Number Two, you will find large knots, mineral streaks and other defects quite visible. Number two is normally used in very rustic applications as in a cabin. Exotic grading is more confusing as pet names like "Preferred" or "Top Grade" are used with no meaning behind it. However a few are using the North America standard and typically only offer Clear or Select and Better. The cost to ship overseas does not lend itself to selling the lower grades so if you see a lower grade it could be a milling problem. The two lower grades have rarely been seen in North America and if they are I would seriously question it as it could mean something else. Look for the two top grades for your project as they are the better selection and wiser choice.
3. Milling - this is how they mill the wood into flooring and numerous things can turn your project into a nightmare if the wood is not milled properly. Consistent widths, thickness, end matching and side matching are most of the issues to be aware of. If you have a board that is say five inches wide at one end and at the other it is less or more by a fraction then you will have gaps in the floor. These gaps will expand after several boards are installed and continue to increase in size. If the wood is not milled in consistent thickness then you will have what we call "Over and Underwood". If it is pre-finished then you have a real problem as you are stuck with no way to resolve the elevation problems, if it is unfinished then you will spend a great deal of time and money sanding the floors flat to correct the problem. Finally the tongue and groove profile is critical to a good installation. If the tongue is too tight or too loose then you will have major problems.
4. Cost should be the last consideration when seeking a floor and like most things, if it is too good to be true then it probably is not or it is inexpensive for a reason and that reason may become your problem. Over the years we have had some people tell us that wood is wood and they are only interested in what the cost is. These are the same people that have issues with the lower costs floors because they did not educate themselves about what to look for and ultimately it cost them a lot more than if they had purchased a proper floor in the beginning. We hope this has helped you understand a little about searching for your wood floor.