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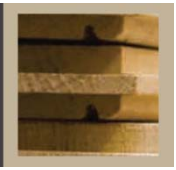
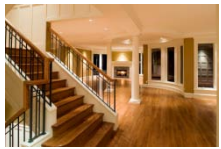


seeing the wood for the trees

A technical guide to: Wood Flooring



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OakieDoakie - seeing the wood for the trees

Hardwood flooring is the increasingly popular and great value choice for achieving a stylish, hard wearing and practical floor covering. But how do I choose the right flooring? How much timber will I need? How much will it cost? How do I install and maintain my floor?

OakieDoakie are timber experts who can guide you through the entire process, from source and selection to fixing and finishing, answering all your questions along the way. We hope this guide is helpful to you, but please do contact us for further advice or information; all our staff are highly experienced and knowledgeable and at your service.

The French Connection

Sourcing the majority of our timber from PEFC approved forests in the Loire region; we supply our trade and retail customers with the finest wide oak boards, high quality character grade boards, and a rustic grade to suit all budgets.

French oak has much of the character associated with traditional English wide board oak and a depth and colour not matched by east European or Asian supplies.

Sourcing all our oak from sustainable managed forests may affect cost, but it's a price tag worth paying for a healthy environment, not to mention the long term investment in your floor.

A cheaper option is American white oak but it is typically grown too quickly resulting in a wood with much less character or interesting feature grain.

How do I choose the right flooring?

Location is important. It influences the type of board and may determine the finish you need. Heavy duty and commercial spaces require different finishing treatments to a domestic area, such as a lounge or bathroom.

Small rooms, for example, can benefit from narrow or mixed width boards while important period or historic buildings may demand very specific patina matching.

For the more difficult treatments where specialist techniques are required, OakieDoakie offers a complete French polishing service.

Does under floor heating make a difference?

Yes, if you have or wish to have under floor heating, our showroom staff will be pleased to advise you and explain the options for your consideration.

For example, some modern under floor plumbing systems may require engineered oak board. Alternatively, some floors require vapour barriers and are better fixed with special adhesives.

Can I install my own floor?

Yes, you can. If you are competent at DIY, most floors can be self-installed and finished. We can also recommend good trades people who can install specialist flooring and advise you on important aspects of your floor's maintenance during the fitting.

Tips

- Check the moisture content before laying your oak flooring. New concrete takes at least a month per inch of depth to dry out.
If you lay new boards over damp or uncured concrete screeds, the oak floor may cup or dish. And never accelerate drying times; you will regret your impatience!

- Engineered oak should be laid in bathrooms and/or kitchens.

- Never fire air powered or electric nailers into screeds with under-floor plumbing.

- Wear soft, non black rubber shoes when working on unsealed new boards.

How much will it cost?

Everyone has a budget. Of course, the old adage is true: you get what you pay for. The secret of a bargain is value for money, what to ask for and what to expect.

Buying lower grade rustic boards in short lengths is relatively inexpensive. But expect to have large knots; very large and ‘open’ in some cases, and probably with a high degree of character surface marking. In an old cottage, however, this big knotted heavy character grain is ideal provided it’s filled and sealed properly.

If you want a wood floor with smaller, stable knots and perfectly matched colour boards for a refined finish, you’ll need a medium to high grade timber. You’ll also need a bigger budget, but it will be the floor you always wished for.

OakieDoakie wants its customers to have long-lasting, beautiful floors they can be proud of. This means our timber, which is typically of a higher quality than our competitors, tends to be a bit more expensive. Again, you get what you pay for. But remember to compare like for like and make sure you are paying for the same grade.

"Don't buy cheap and expect perfect ... it won't happen."

Tips

- Buy boards with sanded, pre-filled knots and seal yourself.

- Trim out knots and fix extra floor joists to meet the shortened ends.

- Mixed grades, lengths and widths lend character and can be cheaper if stocks are available: contact our showroom.

- Ask if we have end of line stock available. Sometimes we can do the impossible, but not everyone gets lucky!

- Narrow shorter boards tend to be less expensive.

- Choose a DIY-friendly product and fit it yourself. Although you will have to do the work, you can achieve so much more for your money with some patience and hard work.

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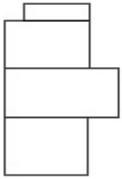
Tips
- Buy a plugging kit with pre-cut plugs and matched cutter attachment for your electric power drill.

How much timber will I need?

Calculating how many square metres of timber you need is straight forward: simply multiply the length by the width and allow a percentage for waste. If your room isn't square, you may find it easier to measure in sections as per the diagram below and total the measurements.



A waste factor is necessary to accommodate 'off square' walls, and to allow for the fact that a room is never an exact multiple of boards in terms of width and length. Waste factor rule of thumb: allow 10%.

Installing, Fixing and Finishing

Installing your floor

First, know your wood: a quick lesson in kiln treatment and moisture content.

Good timber is stable. Historically, to achieve stability, timber was cut and stacked in the open air with battens between each rough cut plank.

This process of air drying could take up to several years, although one year per imperial inch of thickness was always a guide.

The thick rough planks were then planed to within a machine pass of the intended final depth, left to stand for several days and re-machined to a final thickness. The principle purpose of this exercise was to achieve stability and effectively release the latent energy in the timber.

Today, due to time and cost pressures, most oak is kiln dried to an average moisture content of between 9% and 12%.

Leaving a gap

The oak we supply is properly kiln dried and accurately machined, but remains a natural material. It can expand and contract slightly with the changing seasons and with varying atmospheric conditions in any given room.

This potential movement should be accommodated by allowing an expansion gap of 2.5mm for each metre width of the floor. Failure to leave the relevant gap may cause the floor to cup or lift.

The expansion gap is finally disguised by the skirting board. Strip cork can also be used to fill difficult gaps at abutments to fireplaces and staircases where skirting would be inappropriate.

Solid oak floors will always have a slight gap (a few mm at most) between the boards, even when properly acclimatised and fitted. These gaps are a feature of a solid floor. Do not try to clamp the boards too tight as this may recreate stresses within the boards.

More about under floor heating: our four step guide

We recommend you use an experienced fitter on all such applications.

1. The first and most important step is to ensure that the under-floor heating supplier is aware that a wooden floor is to be fitted to ensure the correct system is specified.

2. Ensure the correct system temperature.

3. Use our engineered boards: the ideal solution for under floor heating. Engineered board has a base layer of water-resistant ply glued together in opposing directions and finished with an oak top layer. This gives the appearance and the durability of a solid board but with stability built in.

4. Always build up to room temperature slowly to allow your floor to adapt.

Fixing your floor

We can advise you on the most appropriate fixing method for your floor. And remember, using power tools without proper training and precautions is dangerous. Always wear proper protection and ask to be shown how to use the equipment by a qualified person.

Secret Nailing: Fix the nails at 45 degrees through the tongue of the board with the nail head punched below the surface. When the next board is located, the nail head is covered so no fixings are seen on the surface of the board. The tongues should be pilot drilled before inserting the nail to avoid splitting the tongue; particularly important near the ends of boards.

Tips

- An easier and quicker method is to use a mechanical nail-gun (sometimes called a Porta-nailer, Powernailer or compressed air gun). This method can be used on all sizes of engineered oak and solid oak up to 150mm width when fitted to plywood sub base, batons & joists.

Surface Fixing: Either using a traditional hammer and nails or a mechanical power nailer, fix directly through the surface into floor joists using nails or brass screws.

You should ensure nail heads are punched and screw heads are countersunk beneath the surface of the board. To avoid splitting, always pre-drill if you are using screws or manually hammering.
Remember that brass screws will not withstand over-tightening. Steel screws must always be driven beneath the surface; corked, plugged or filled to avoid the tanic acid in the oak rusting the steel.

- Always surface-fix at every joist interval with nails or plugged screws to cope with the extra board width of Regency oak and wide boards.

Some fitters will use special micro nails through the surface to achieve the same effect as orthodox surface fixing. Ask a specialist before you try this.

Traditionally, carpenters used hand forged cut nails but, during the twentieth century, lost head or oval nails became the norm.
Some of our customers prefer to see the nail head, others choose to fill or plug; there is no right or wrong, it is purely a matter of taste. If you wish to nail fix your floor but currently have a concrete sub-floor, you will first need to locate softwood batons onto the concrete.

Tips
- When fixing batons to the concrete you should ensure they are at 90° to the direction in which you wish the floorboards to run.

- Batons should be at least 25mm x 50mm in order to allow sufficient depth for the nails and will need to be set at 400mm centres to prevent the floor 'bouncing' or 'sagging'. Ensure batons are completely dry to avoid any moisture transfer which may cause 'cupping' to the oak boards.

Gluing: A specialist adhesive is required, for which we recommend and stock SIKA BOND T54; suitable for fixing both traditional and engineered boards.

What are the advantages of SIKA BOND T54?

- 1-part, ready to use
- Solvent free
- Odourless
- Elastic, footfall-sound-dampening adhesive
- Suitable for common types of wood floors

- Suitable for bonding wood floors directly onto old ceramic tiles
- Reduces transverse stress between the wood floor and the substrate
- Suitable for subfloor heating
- Can be sanded

Tips
- Use SIKA BOND PRIMER on concrete screed floors to provide a surface seal to reduce possible moisture transfer.

Floating method: The floating method is only suitable for engineered boards and involves laying the floor over a structural subfloor rather than fixing to it. An appropriate underlay is required and the tongue & groove joints of the boards should be carefully fixed using good quality glue, avoiding any overspill onto the surface of the board.

Finishing your floor

The majority of our oak boards are pre-sanded and filled on the top face and should only need a sanding along the joints and a light surface sanding prior to sealing on site.

A professional finish can be achieved with a little effort and patience, even by a relative novice.

Hard finish: A lacquer or varnish is more difficult to apply and requires care and good judgement with a brush or roller after accurate pre sanding. The lacquer forms a protective surface on the face of the board for heavy traffic areas. Good quality lacquers

are usually very durable, but once damaged or worn, are not easy to repair locally.

Depending on the product and the level of traffic, it will require fully sanding back and resealing approximately every 5 - 10 years.

Generally, hard finishes are more difficult to damage in the short term and more work to repair in the long term than soft wax or oil finishes.

Soft finish: Oils and waxes are soft finishes that penetrate the surface of the wood, filling the pores. This allows the rich patina associated with traditional wooden floors to be developed, with regular maintenance, over time.

These finishes are not 100% resistant to stains, such as red wine. Although soft finishes may scratch, small areas of wear or scratches can be locally repaired with sandpaper and the re-application of oil or wax. Also, the marks of day to day wear will enhance rather than detract from the aged look of a floor.

We recommend clear or coloured Hardwax (Polyx) Oil: a combination of oil and wax, easily applied with a brush, which dries to leave a durable satin or matt finish that is water resistant, stain repellent and locally repairable.

Tips
- Always use lint free cloth when applying oil or wax.
- If you choose soft waxes or Danish oil, use several diluted coats rather than one single application.

Moisture: wood's worst enemy!

The biggest threat to a solid oak floor is moisture. Regardless of how good the product or how well it is fitted, the presence or introduction of moisture is likely to cause problems. It may expand the timber, causing the floor to cup or lift. This can be repaired, but it's a costly exercise; better to tackle it pro-actively than after the event.

Moisture in the timber is a customer responsibility and not that of the supplier or fitter of the floor. So remember to ensure that any room into which you are planning to fit a solid wood floor is not subject to damp. Ensure the room has no history of winter damp or flooding and that any new plaster work or concrete has had sufficient time to fully dry out.

ALWAYS STORE YOUR OAK FLOORING IN THE ROOM IN WHICH IT IS TO BE LAID FOR AT LEAST 10 DAYS TO ALLOW IT TO ACCLIMATISE TO ITS NEW ENVIRONMENT. IF POSSIBLE, STICK THE OAK BUNDLES TO ALLOW FULL MOVEMENT OF AIR AROUND THE PRODUCT. THIS WILL HELP REDUCE ANY LARGE MOVEMENTS WITHIN THE OAK ONCE THE FLOOR IS LAID.

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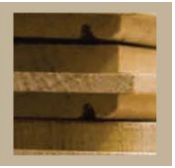

Oak Grading Guide

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Oak Grading Guide

Thickness: Solid board - 20mm; Engineered board – 21mm (6mm oak over 15mm ply)

Widths: Solid Prime, Select and Character 150mm,190mm & 230mm. Solid Rustic 190mm. Engineered Character 180mm & 220mm Solid Chene Ancien 180mm & 250mm.. Engineered Chene Ancien 180mm & 250mm. Engineered burnt oak 180mm; Solid Limed 190mm

Lengths: Solid Character, Select and Prime 1500 - 2400mm (up to 10%<1500mm). Solid Rustic 1000 - 1900mm (up to 20%<1000mm). Solid Chene Ancien up to 3000mm. Engineered Character 1500 - 2400mm (up to 10%<1500mm). Engineered Chene Ancien up to 3000mm. Engineered burnt oak 1500 - 2400mm (up to 10%<1500mm). Solid Limed 1500 - 2400mm (up to 10%<1500mm).

Machined: Solid - T/G end matched. Square edged. Filled and sanded. Kiln Dried to 9-12%. Expansion grooves. Boards may require sanding along the joints when laid.
Engineered - T/G end matched. Micro bevel. Filled and sanded..Kiln Dried to 9-12%.

Woodworm

If any woodworm holes remain, it is most unlikely that the worm/flight holes are active after the boards have been through the kiln drying process. If you find any flight holes prior to fitting the floor, you could either exchange the boards or if it is just the odd hole this could be treated with a proprietary woodworm treatment.

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Solid French Oak: Prime

Colour	Even colour
Knots	Mainly clear boards. Occasional pencil knots up to 10mm diameter. Filled and sanded.
Splits/Sap	No splits or sap permitted.

These images are meant as a guide only, of likely character in each grade. Often boards could fit into higher or lower grades depending on the overall consignment

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Solid French Oak: Select

Colour	Minimal colour variation
Knots	Mainly clear boards. Occasional pencil knots up to 20mm. Filled and sanded.
Splits/Sap	No splits or sap permitted.

These images are meant as a guide only, of likely character in each grade. Often boards could fit into higher or lower grades depending on the overall consignment

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Solid French Oak: Character

Colour	Limited minor colour variation permitted.
Knots	Occasional clear boards. Sound knots up to 35mm diameter filled and sanded. Filled and sanded.
Splits/Sap	Occasional small stable end splits one end – length up to 50mm. Very occasional sound hard sap up to 2% of face area of the board.

These images are meant as a guide only, of likely character in each grade. Often boards could fit into higher or lower grades depending on the overall consignment

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Solid French Oak: Rustic

Colour	Limited colour variation allowed.
Knots	Unlimited knot size. Filled and sanded.
Splits/Sap	Occasional small stable end splits one end – length up to 100mm. Occasional sound hard sap up to 5% of face area of the board.

These images are meant as a guide only, of likely character in each grade. Often boards could fit into higher or lower grades depending on the overall consignment

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Engineered French Oak: Character

Colour	Limited colour variation allowed.
Knots	Occasional clear boards. Sound knots up to 45mm diameter size. Filled and sanded.
Splits/Sap	Occasional sound hard sap up to 2% of face area of the board.

These images are meant as a guide only, of likely character in each grade. Often boards could fit into higher or lower grades depending on the overall consignment

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Solid Oak:
Chene Ancien

Colour	Colour variation allowed.
Knots	Occasional clear boards. Sound knots up to 45mm diameter
Splits/Sap	Occasional sound hard sap up to 2% of face area of the board.

These images are meant as a guide only, of likely character in each grade. Often boards could fit into higher or lower grades depending on the overall consignment

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Engineered Oak: Chene Ancien

Colour	Colour variation allowed.
Knots	Occasional clear boards. Sound knots up to 45mm diameter.
Splits/Sap	Occasional sound hard sap up to 2% of face area of the board.

These images are meant as a guide only, of likely character in each grade. Often boards could fit into higher or lower grades depending on the overall consignment

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Engineered French Oak: Burnt Oak (Light)

Colour	Limited colour variation allowed.
Knots	Occasional clear boards. Sound knots up to 45mm diameter. Filled and sanded.
Splits/Sap	Occasional sound hard sap up to 2% of face area of the board.

These images are meant as a guide only, of likely character in each grade. Often boards could fit into higher or lower grades depending on the overall consignment

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Engineered French Oak: Burnt Oak (Medium)

Colour	Limited colour variation allowed.
Knots	Occasional clear boards. Sound knots up to 45mm diameter. Filled and sanded.
Splits/Sap	Occasional sound hard sap up to 2% of face area of the board.

These images are meant as a guide only, of likely character in each grade. Often boards could fit into higher or lower grades depending on the overall consignment

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Solid French Oak: Limed

Colour	Limited colour variation allowed.
Knots	Occasional clear boards. Sound knots up to 35mm diameter. Filled and sanded.
Splits/Sap	Occasional small stable end splits one end – length up to 50mm. Occasional sound hard sap up to 2% of face area of the board.

These images are meant as a guide only, of likely character in each grade. Often boards could fit into higher or lower grades depending on the overall consignment

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For further help & advice...

Please visit our Cotswold showrooms, browse all our products online, or simply call us.

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