

Real Oak Floors - Installation Tips

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Handling and Storage

It is essential that you unload your wooden flooring in dry weather, never unload the flooring in the rain as the moisture could cause the planks to warp. Your wooden flooring should be stored in a dry place at room temperature and if possible should be raised off the ground (on a palette for instance). You should store your wood flooring in the room that it will be laid for a minimum of 72 hours (preferably a week) so that it has time to acclimatise to the moisture and temperature of the room.

Preparing To Lay Your Flooring

The most dangerous enemy of a hardwood floor is moisture; you must ensure that the sub-floor (i.e. concrete, plaster or timber) is dry. This is especially true when laying a hard wood floor in a new build property where concrete floors will still contain a high level of moisture. Your solid wood flooring should have been allowed sufficient time to acclimatise to the conditions of the room in advance of installation.

Any timber – existing flooring, joinery or battens – should have a moisture content of no more than +2% above the moisture content of the new floor. It is advisable when laying on to existing timber that you ensure it is treated against fungal or insect attack. Concrete or screed should contain a damp proof membrane and have a moisture content of no more than 5%. This is in practice almost impossible to achieve and so additional precautions should be taken to prevent moisture reaching the new floor.

Concrete or screed will take approximately 1 day per mm thickness or 1 month per 25mm of thickness to dry naturally to a moisture content of 5%. The deeper the concrete slab the longer the period, for example a 150mm slab will probably take 10-12 months to dry back to a safe moisture level.

The ambient conditions in the room should lie somewhere in the range of 40-50% humidity and a temperature of 15 to 25°C at the time of laying the floor. Only order the floor when you are ready to lay it. Under no circumstances store it in a room that is wet or outside, or even in a garage where it could pick up moisture.

Take the floor into the room in which it is to be laid in the optimum working conditions and allow it to adjust to the temperature for a minimum of 72 hours - preferably 1 week. True acclimatisation will take a few weeks and this is best done after the floor has been laid (assuming correct allowance has been made for expansion and contraction).

Allowing For Expansion

All wood floors will expand and contract over the course of the year. Typically hardwood will expand across its width during the summer as the air becomes more humid and the wood takes in the moisture, and shrink during the winter when the heating dries out the air and removes moisture from the boards. Kiln drying to 8-10% moisture content will minimise excessive movement. A gap of 15mm to 20mm should be left around the floor to allow for expansion. However,

a floor laid in winter that will expand in the summer may require additional expansion to be allowed across the width of the floor.

Recommended fitting methods

All solid floors should ideally be installed by secret nailing to timber (either an existing floor or battens or plywood laid over concrete). The advantage of this method is that the boards can be fitted tighter together for a better fit. In addition, the mechanical fixing of the boards is a long established technique that allows the boards to expand and contract whilst remaining firmly fixed down. Should any board begin to move because the sub-floor has moved over the course of time (for example as new joists continue to dry out) the floor can be further nailed or screwed down, something it is not possible to do when floors have been glued.

Gluing directly to concrete is becoming an established method of fixing. Where this is seen as the preferred option we would still recommend the laying of plywood over the concrete and the floor being glued and pinned to the plywood. Any board more than five times wider than it is thick is more prone to bowing and cupping. Therefore any board over 140mm wide should be additionally secured across its width either by screwing and pelleting, face nailing or using adhesive on the back of the board.

In General

In the kitchen, the flooring should be installed under kitchen appliances, but be very careful when the appliances are moved over the floor. You can use floor-protecting pads on the feet of smaller appliances to protect your flooring against scratches and scuff marks.

Disclaimer

Real Oak Floors Ltd has used reasonable care in the preparation of these guidelines. However, they do not form part of any contract do we accept any responsibility for any error, omission, loss, damage or liability suffered or incurred as a result of use or reliance upon these guidelines.

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