



How do I choose?



Natural wood or laminate for my floor? How long can I expect it to last? Who can install it? These are just some of the questions that every homeowner needs answering before deciding which type of floor to use. *The Great Flooring Guide* sought the answers from the local guru on both types of flooring – Peter Geyer of FloorworX.

WHY SHOULD I CHOOSE REAL WOOD?

Engineered wood floors are boards of multilayered design, which makes them less expensive than solid wood. Engineered wood is pre-finished, with no sanding or sealing required, no installation mess, and the floor can be walked on the same day it is installed.

You should insist on some proof from the supplier that the equivalent number of trees used in their products are replanted through the strict control of the Forest Stewardship Council and that the wood used comes from a sustainable and controlled source.

The natural beauty and the genuine wood colour cannot be beaten for the real wood look, and the sound and feel adds real ambience to the home. Its ease of installation, maintenance and cleaning, plus its anti-allergenic properties, make real wood of true value to any home.

HOW DO I KNOW MY FLOORS WILL LAST?

You should get a written guarantee from the manufacturer and not from the installer; enquire about what type of wood was used on the final overlay; insist on water-borne finishes (not solvent-based) as these also help to preserve the environment. Do some research on the Internet regarding the source and the quality as well as the local supplier.

WHY SHOULD I CHOOSE A LAMINATE FLOOR?

The cost of laminates is generally less than wood floors, and they are well known for their ease of maintenance. Easily installed, laminates also can be provided as a DIY option.

They are also highly scratch-resistant, fade-resistant, and certain laminate manufacturers guarantee that their laminates will not pull apart. Underfloor heating can be used under good-quality laminate flooring, although special requirements need to be met.

The new technology can give the effect of real wood looks, colour variation and feel. Most people decide on the basis of colour and quality, but my initial advice is to research the retailer with whom you are going to deal with.

HOW DO I KNOW MY FLOOR WILL LAST?

Ensure the product you want to select is graded by the EPLF (European Producers of Laminate Flooring) or the South African Bureau of Standards, and check with SAWLFA (South African Wood and Laminate Flooring Association) whether the supplier of the particular brand is a member. You can also research the brands on the Internet.

Also, research your potential retailers thoroughly and make sure they are also members, and insist that your guarantees are valid from the manufacturer. Don't forget that product guarantees do not cover poor installations.

WHO CAN INSTALL MY FLOOR?

90% of product failures are due to poor installation; for a good installation the dampness in screeds and substrates must be checked. Floor level and expansion requirements should also be checked, as some products expand more than others.

Not all installers have the correct equipment and experience to correctly install your laminate floor. So ensure your installer has been accredited by SAWLFA as they have to meet strict installation requirements. There are, at present, ten Master Installers in South Africa, who are well equipped and qualified to take on the most difficult installations. (They can be sourced via the SAWLFA website.)

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