

Introduction

There are no standards that outline what an acceptable appearance of timber floor should be. There are standards that relate to the manufacture of timber flooring and when recommended sanded and finishes practices are undertaken, there is a general level of acceptance of the finished product in the marketplace. Floors of the same species can differ markedly in their appearance, depending on timber source, age of the tree, board cover width, the finish system used and the lighting in which the floor is viewed. Timber is a natural product that will shrink and swell in response to changes in atmospheric humidity, no building environment is the same as another, the sanding and finishing is not undertaken in a dust free factory environment and finishes may darken with time. Even with these variables a high standard in the finished floor is achievable. This data sheet outlines what is considered an acceptable appearance for a timber floor.

Acceptable Appearance

Even timber surface

The following outlines some problems that affect the surface of the boards and these should not generally occur in timber floors. However, specific heat sources from appliances or sun exposure through large uncovered windows may induce some cupping of boards in the affected area. Similarly, wide boards or thinner overlay boards may also show some slight cupping in certain house environments. It should also be recognised that the actions or inaction of owners can contribute or even cause these to occur.

- Cupping - boards with their edges either higher or lower than the centre of the board. Heat in a specific location or a very dry environment above the floor may result in cupping. Moist sub-floor spaces can also cause boards to cup. Cupping is more likely to occur in overlay flooring and standard thickness boards that are wider than 100 mm. To some degree a small amount of cupping may

- occur in some locations within a dwelling (e.g. sun exposed floor) where these types of flooring are used.
- Tenting - two adjacent boards, where the adjoining edge has lifted above the level of the adjacent flooring. This is often associated with high moisture beneath the floor and can be from many causes.
- Buckling - a section of flooring containing a number of boards raised above an adjacent section of flooring.
- Crowning - floor boards that are flat on their lower surfaces but where the upper surface has its edges lower than the centre of the board. This may occur if a floor is cupped (board edges up) at the time of sanding. Crowning does not become apparent until some months after finishing.

Note: Floors exposed to heat sources after occupancy (e.g. no curtains, fireplaces, vents from appliances, houses closed up for extended periods) may cause boards to cup. Cupping and shrinkage from such sources may be the owner's responsibility.)

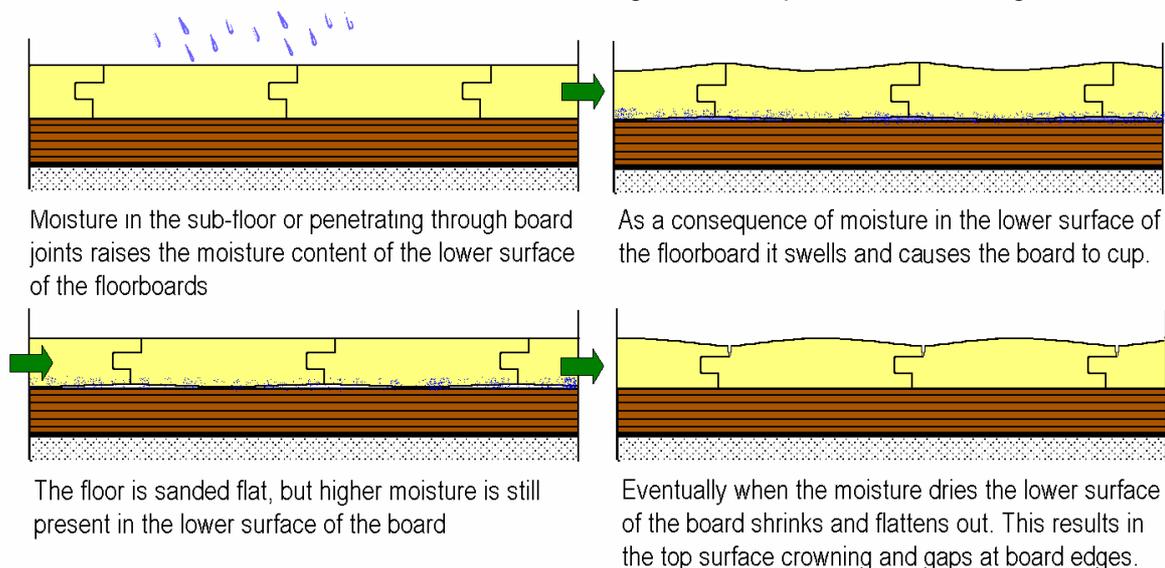


Figure 1 - The process of crowning

Moisture in the sub-floor or penetrating through board joints raises the moisture content of the lower surface of the floorboards

As a consequence of moisture in the lower surface of the floorboard it swells and causes the board to cup.

The floor is sanded flat, but higher moisture is still present in the lower surface of the board

Eventually when the moisture dries the lower surface of the board shrinks and flattens out. This results in the top surface crowning and gaps at board edges.

Relatively even gapping between boards in areas not exposed to specific heat sources

During drier times of the year, gapping between boards may average 0.75 mm. Some gaps may be larger than this and others smaller, however, the appearance generally indicates gapping between most boards.

An appearance can be expected that is free from split boards and wide gaps between boards that may be irregularly-spaced across the floor. Irregularly-spaced wide gapping may occur from either the edges of boards being bonded together or from a proportion of boards being high in moisture content at the time of laying.

Limited vertical movement at T & G joints

Flooring is manufactured with the board tongue narrower than the groove. This is necessary so that boards will fit together during installation. When floor boards are laid over joists in particular, some differential vertical movement may occur between adjacent boards, when a load is applied to an individual board. This is due to the clearance between the tongue and the groove. The clearance should not exceed 0.6 mm.

Minimal Squeaking

A small amount of noise can be expected from most timber floors when walked on. Noises can occur from movement of one board edge against another or from boards moving on nails. A floor is often more noisy during drier weather due to loosening at the joints.

Indentations

Timber strip floors can be expected to show some indentations depending on the hardness of the species used, volume of traffic and footwear worn.

A Finish with Minimal Contamination and Sanding Marks

A finish similar to that of fine furniture should not be expected. Timber strip floors are not finished in a factory environment and different pieces of flooring will sand differently. The home environment is also not dust free. However, the finished floor can be expected to have an even appearance free from heavy sanding marks, blooming or frequent air bubbles in the surface. A minimal level of contaminants, minor sanding marks and small depressions of the finish at board edges and in nail holes etc. may be visible. The perimeter and other hard to get at places are more likely to contain these irregularities. Due to this a mirror finish is an unachievable expectation. Some finishes will also yellow with time, and if rugs are moved a contrast in the depth of colour can be expected.

When floors are inspected for imperfections, the floor is to be inspected during daylight hours with lighting on. The overall assessment of the floor is from a standing position with the floor viewed from positions that are usually occupied by people. Internal and external reflections in areas not usually covered by furniture should be assessed. Acceptability relies on judgement that takes into consideration the effect of lighting on noticeable surface imperfections as well as initial wear of the floor, which can cause some imperfections to significantly lessen or disappear. A floor is subject to much heavier wear than furniture and although a good quality finish can be expected, the same finish quality as furniture should not be expected.

Some imperfections that could be expected to some degree in a floor but which should also be assessed include:- sanding quality; gloss variation; dust, insects and debris; bubbles and gel particles; coat leveling.

Safe Working

Working with timber produces dust particles. Protection of the eyes, nose and mouth when sanding, sawing and planing is highly recommended. Refer to tool manufacturers for safe working recommendations for particular items of equipment.

Disposal of Offcuts and Waste

For any treated timber, do not burn offcuts or sawdust. Preservative treated offcuts and sawdust should be disposed of by approved local authority methods.



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