Before You Choose a Wooden Floor

Re:claimed

Considerations

Buying a wooden floor is rarely a straightforward process. Beyond appearance, there are technical decisions, structural considerations and fitting methods that all shape how a floor will perform and age.

That's why we've created this guide. To help you understand the nature of wood, the choices that matter, and how to avoid expensive compromises along the way.

Solid & Engineered

Solid

Each board is formed from a single, solid piece of wood. Compared to engineered alternatives, solid boards offer greater depth, allowing for re-sanding over time if ever required.

That said, we rarely recommend sanding back our pre-finished platforms. Doing so removes the patina that gives the floor its character. With thoughtful, regular aftercare, the surface matures naturally, preserving its depth, calm and quiet beauty.

Engineered

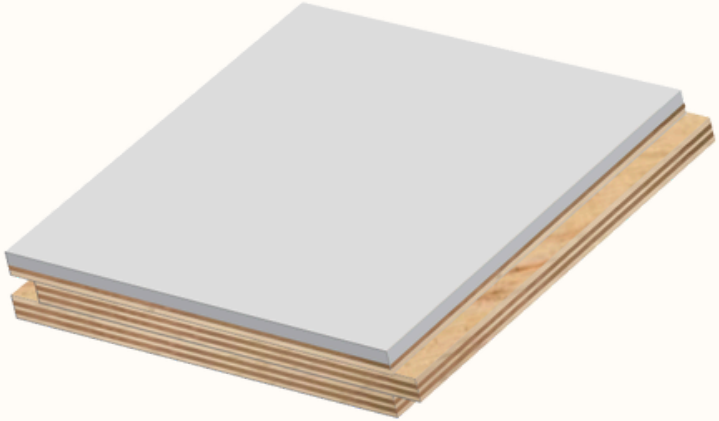
Engineered flooring is a multi-layered board, featuring a solid oak wear layer bonded to a stable core of plywood or softwood, with hardwood strips beneath.

This construction is designed to improve stability. As a natural material, wood will expand and contract in response to seasonal changes. Engineered structures help manage this movement, reducing the risk of distortion and long-term issues.

Is The Birch Plywood Important?

We use WBP birch plywood — Water Boiled Proof — a grade engineered to withstand extreme conditions. It can be submerged in boiling water for 30 minutes without delamination, a level of resilience that matters when floors are exposed to internal moisture, temperature fluctuations, and the demands of underfloor heating, as well as kitchens and bathrooms. Cheaper birch or softwood plywoods rarely endure this environment over time.

Our boards are carefully balanced. The weight per cubic metre of the oak wear layer is harmonised with the solid birch ply base, ensuring consistent density throughout. This balance delivers acoustic performance that mirrors our traditional solid floorboards, producing the same calm, assured sound underfoot.



Reclaimed

American barns, stone caves, French country homes and Victorian factories are just some of the remarkable places from which our reclaimed wood is sourced.

Shaped by time rather than trend, each board carries a quiet depth and natural artistry that cannot be replicated — an enduring expression of material, history and timeless quality.

Reclaimed and New

Reclaimed wood is typically sourced from trees that are over 200 years old. Slow-grown by nature, their grain is tighter, the structure denser, and the timber inherently stronger and more durable.

In contrast, much of today's globally managed forestry favours speed, producing wider growth rings and a looser grain. Time is the difference — and it shows in the depth, strength and quiet confidence of the material.

Cladding

Wall cladding has become a defining feature within contemporary interiors. Restaurants, hotels and workplaces use it to create atmosphere and depth, while in residential spaces, it transforms blank walls into something considered and bespoke.

Whether mixed-width, new or reclaimed, multi-tonal cladding introduces texture, warmth and a quiet sense of nature into the home.

Re:claimed

Re:sourced

Re:imagined

Most Common Styles

Versailles

Planks

Herringbone

Chevron

Widht

Wide Plank

Wide plank flooring has long been associated with elegance and restraint. Rooted in Georgian architecture, its appeal is timeless rather than nostalgic, and it translates effortlessly into both classic and contemporary settings.

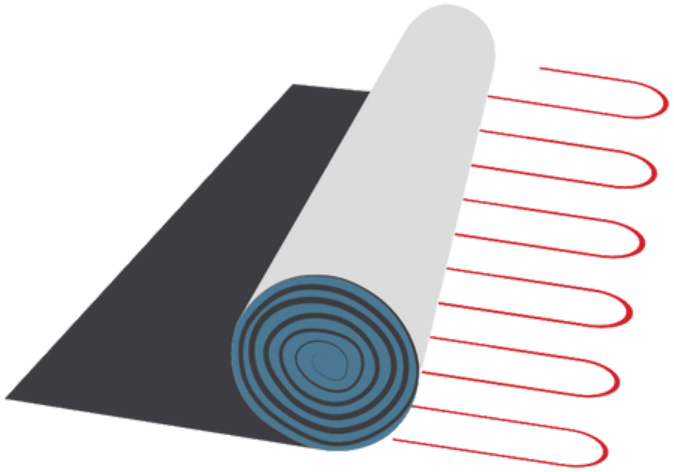
Whatever the tone, wide planks bring a sense of scale and craftsmanship to a space. Laid across a room, they allow the material to breathe, becoming a quiet yet confident focal point within the architecture.

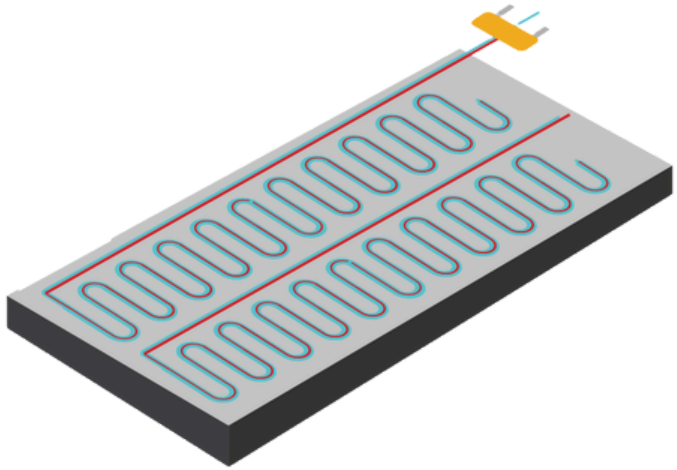
Narrow Plank

Narrow plank, or strip oak flooring, is a modernist revival that introduces rhythm and definition without overpowering a space. Its finer proportions bring structure and clarity, making it well-suited to restrained, contemporary interiors.

Finished in a clean, raw oak tone, it complements minimalist architecture with ease. Treated with a deeper, traditional stain, the same format takes on a more dramatic presence, adding depth and contrast while retaining its disciplined character.

Under Floor Heating (UFH) : Types





Electrical Matting Systems

These are among the most commonly used systems in the UK, mainly due to their straightforward installation. The engineered hardwood floor floats above a heated mat, which is controlled by a thermostat beneath.
Consistent, even heat distribution is essential. When correctly specified, these systems reduce the risk of hot spots, helping to protect the engineered structure and prevent issues such as delamination over time.

Hot Water Pipe Systems

This system operates in much the same way as traditional central heating, with the pipes set within a screed.
Before any flooring is installed, the screed must be fully checked to ensure the relative humidity of the concrete has reduced to 75% or below. The most reliable method is a drilled hygrometer test, where plastic probes are inserted into the screed and left for 24 hours before accurate readings are taken.

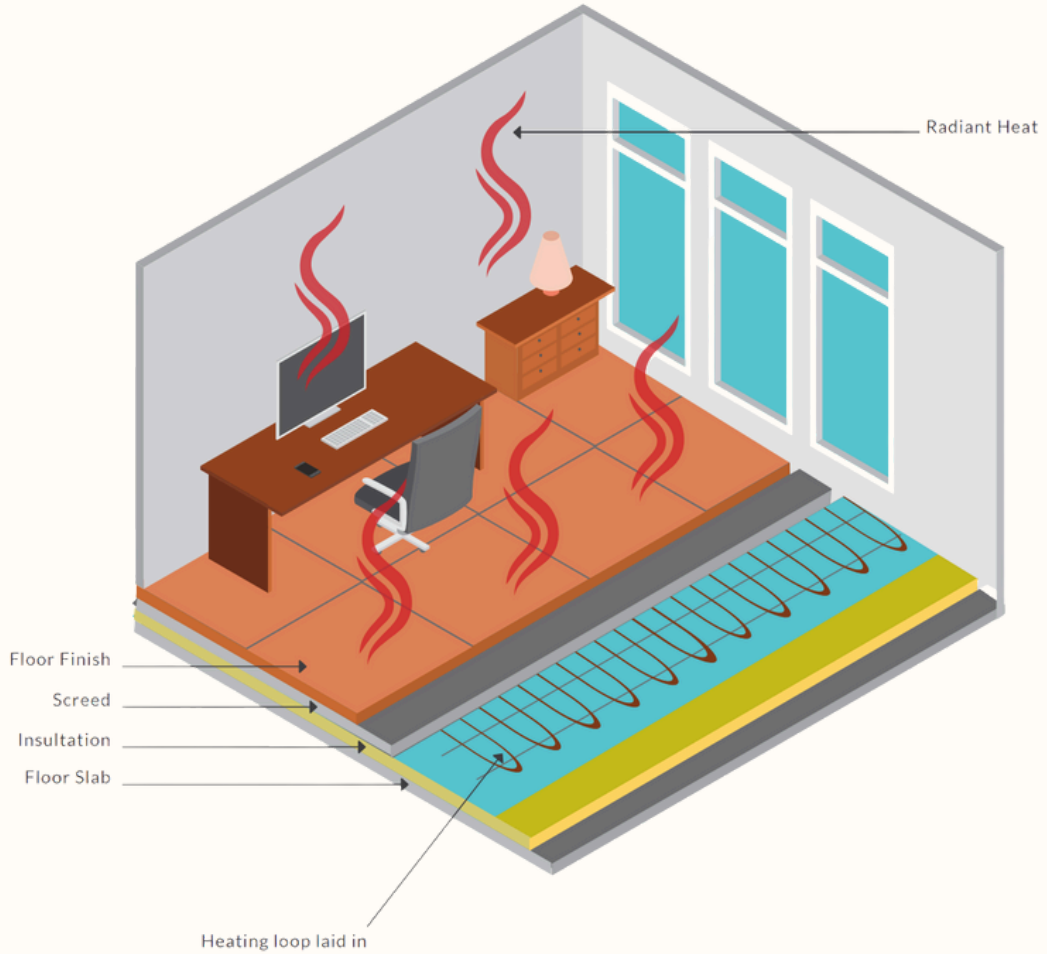
Installation should only begin once the correct relative humidity levels have been achieved, and the underfloor heating system has been fully commissioned and running for a minimum of two weeks.
There are many underfloor heating systems available, each with its own requirements. Always follow the manufacturer's guidance carefully, as specifications and conditions can vary between systems.

Under Floor Heating (UFH) : Fitting

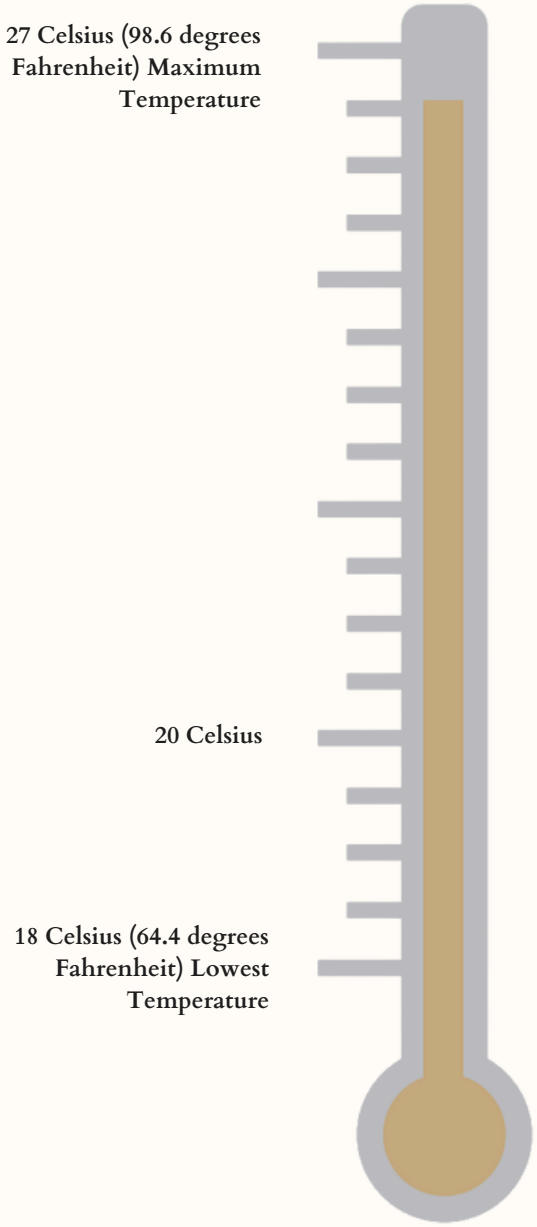
Qualified installers should carry out this stage, ideally those recommended by the underfloor heating manufacturer. A flow control valve is essential, ensuring the temperature at the interface between the wood floor and the screed or underlay never exceeds 27°C.

Before installation begins, final responsibility for inspection rests with the installer or owner. This includes assessing grade, manufacture and factory finish. Reasonable selectivity is expected, with any boards showing deficiencies set aside or trimmed as necessary. Minor touch-ups, such as using stain, filler, or putty, are considered standard practice during installation.

Environmental conditions must also be confirmed. Relative humidity within the space should be tested, and the moisture content of any subfloor or screed must be below 4% before laying the floor.



Temperature and Humidity



- Many engineered wood floors are suitable for use with underfloor heating and cooling — but not all. When in doubt, guidance should be sought from a specialist supplier, such as TRADA, or a combination of British Standard 8201:1987 and a specialist supplier, to confirm suitability.

- Stability is key. Temperatures should remain consistent, with the system never entirely switched off, only reduced to a low setting. Sudden shifts in heat or humidity should always be avoided, as rapid changes can place unnecessary stress on the wood.

- Ideally, room temperature should be maintained at around 20°C and not fall below 18°C, with the relative humidity of the air kept between 35% and 60%. If underfloor heating is brought back to full heat too quickly, the wood can be shocked, leading to lifting or delamination of engineered layers. For this reason, the surface temperature of the floor should never exceed 27°C.

- Care should also be taken when introducing carpets. Additional layers can trap heat, increasing the temperature between the floor and the covering. To maintain a safe surface temperature of 27°C, water pipe temperatures may need to be reduced accordingly.

5 Important Questions

1. Where was the floor manufactured?

When choosing a wood floor, it's worth asking not only where the timber is sourced, but how and where the boards are made. Material quality and construction methods have a direct impact on longevity, and a few considered questions at the outset can prevent costly problems later on.

Our WBP birch ply engineered boards combine structural integrity with the visual depth of solid wood. Even so, not all engineered floors are created equal. The quality of the substrate matters, particularly with underfloor heating, where cheaper constructions can struggle. Understanding both origin and manufacture is essential to choosing a floor that will perform as beautifully as it looks.

2. Is your floor in compliance with the EU safety standards?

All wood contains naturally occurring formaldehyde. The difference lies in the rate at which it is released. Our plywood is classified as E1, with emissions limited to 0.1 ppm, fully compliant with EU safety standards. By comparison, UK regulations permit levels of up to 2.0ppm.

Lower-grade overseas manufacturing often relies on softwood plywood and cheaper adhesives. These can release significantly higher levels of formaldehyde, with implications not only for the environment but also for personal health, particularly for those who are chemically sensitive.

3. Is the plywood water & boil-proof?

Underfloor heating plays a decisive role when selecting a wood floor. As a living material, wood responds to its environment, expanding and contracting with changes in temperature and humidity. For this reason, an engineered board is essential over underfloor heating, though the quality of that construction matters greatly.

The most reliable engineered platforms use high-grade European birch plywood, bonded with natural, formaldehyde-free adhesives and tested to WBP standards. This level of construction offers stability, safety and long-term performance. By contrast, many overseas-produced boards rely on softwood ply and low-cost processes, making them unsuitable for use with underfloor heating in demanding conditions.

4. Are the hard wax oils air-dried?

In our view, a hard wax oiled floor offers a depth and tactility that is difficult to match. Penetrating oils are absorbed into the grain rather than sitting on the surface, allowing the wood to be felt as wood. Walk barefoot across an oil-finished floor, and there is no barrier between you and the material itself.

Surface coatings such as lacquers create a sealed layer above the timber, introducing a plasticised feel. UV-dried oils, often used to speed up production, may appear acceptable at first glance but lack the richness and calm of a naturally air-dried hard wax oil. The finish can look overly glossy, with colour sitting heavily on the surface and masking the character beneath. Without sufficient time to penetrate the pores of the wood, the bond is shallower, resting on the surface rather than becoming part of the timber itself.

Air-dried oils require patience. A minimum of four hours drying time between coats means the process cannot be rushed, which is why many large-scale manufacturers simply cannot accommodate this level of finishing within their production lines.

Lacquer offers a quicker alternative and can look appealing at first, but it is inherently less forgiving. Once damaged, a lacquered floor cannot be repaired locally; the entire surface must be re-sanded and refinished, a disruptive and costly exercise. While some water-based lacquers are promoted as behaving like oils, water and oil remain fundamentally different materials.

Air-dried oils remain the most considered approach.

Taking between eight and twelve hours, this slower process delivers greater depth of colour, longer-lasting protection and a finish that supports the long-term health of the wood, allowing it to mature naturally over time.

The finishing process is built in layers. The first coat penetrates the timber, forming the initial bond and seal. The second is applied above it, adding depth and long-term protection. For this reason, we rarely rely on one-coat systems.

Air-dried oils remain our preferred solution. Taking between eight and twelve hours, the process allows the oil to properly integrate with the wood, producing a more natural, organic colour and supporting the long-term health of the timber, while offering protection that improves with time rather than diminishing.

5. Do You Know The Source Of The Wood?

Reclaimed

Reclaimed wood exists in many grades, shaped by different eras, uses and environments. When specifying it for a project, factors such as historical infestation, potential chemical contamination and overall durability must be carefully considered. Equally important is the availability of sufficient material within the project timeframe. Without a stable and well-managed supply, variation between batches can be significant.

Consistency matters. Samples approved early on may not reflect timber delivered months later if the source, grade and specification have not been clearly defined. This can create challenges for the end result. Age is also a defining factor. There is a profound difference between timber reclaimed a year ago, a century ago, or over three hundred years ago. Without clear provenance and documentation, patina and character can be difficult to compare, leading to uncertainty where clarity is essential.

New

The term “European Oak” has become broad and often imprecise. Understanding where oak is sourced requires more than a country name; land geography, soil composition and climate play a far greater role in shaping the timber. Not all oak performs or looks the same, even within the same borders.

We work exclusively with European Mountain Oak. Grown slowly in higher-altitude regions with poorer soils, limited water and harsher climates, these trees develop tighter grain, greater density and a more composed character. When compared to faster-grown, river-fed oak, the difference is immediate, both visually and structurally.

Our approach is rooted in climate rather than borders. By sourcing from a defined climatic band that runs east to west across Europe, within specific latitudes, we consistently find oak with stable tannin levels, rich grain and the qualities required to produce floors of enduring depth and refinement.