

Expected Performance of Floating Floors

It's important to understand floating floor pros and cons, since they are designed to last for an extended period of time and you want to make the right choice for their application. The term "floating floors" is a system of installation for products like bamboo, engineered timber species & laminates, manufactured with a click or T&G locking system.

One of the most obvious advantages of a floating floor, is that it is installed by connecting segments of flooring together so they "float" over the subfloor or existing flooring surface. A floating floor can be a DIY product for the home handy man or a cost effective way of installing the flooring of your choice to enhance your home. The floating floor system was designed to reduce issues commonly found in solid timber installation like timber cracks, board separation, cupping, crowning, buckling and ghosting.

The features of a floating floor:

1. Can be installed and pulled-up easily
2. Generally easier and cheaper to repair in the event of a problem
3. Can be laid on an acoustic underlay to meet sound requirements for unit-style living
4. Can be laid over different subfloor surfaces (subfloor levelling may be required)
5. Allows boards to naturally expand and contract during temperature change
6. Can be noisier in a residence, because they can creak and echo
7. Requires trims between rooms to allow for natural movement

While walking on a floating floor, people may notice some flexibility and give. This is normal because of the 2-3mm cushion underlay installed between the boards and the subfloor, which actually makes the floor more comfortable for people with leg and back problems. Although some vertical movement is to be expected, too much movement can result in joints weakening or breaking and, consequently, boards rubbing.

With glueless installation, the joints of boards are often waxed, which provides added moisture protection to the joints and reduces most rubbing and squeaking of the boards. However, a subfloor with the correct flatness is still important to avoid noise with these floors. Temperature change can also cause boards to squeak, as boards expand and contract.

Care when installing is also necessary. Ensure that sufficient expansion allowance is provided for the floor, as naturally occurring expansion over a larger expanse of floor can skew sections of the floor, induce some unevenness and result in squeaking. When it comes to correcting squeaks, it must first be recognised as with other timber floors, that a small amount of squeaking can be acceptable. However, as with other flooring systems, floor preparation is important and methods used with other flooring types, such as the use of talcum powder or creating slight gaps at end joints, have been effective.

The floating floor requires an underlay with a built-in moisture barrier to protect from rising dampness and humidity. The better the quality of underlay and moisture barrier, the better protection your floor will have.

It is important to be aware of the environment the floating floor is installed in, especially where temperature changes occur frequently or where moisture levels are high, as this will also have effects on the performance of your floating floor.

All guides and supporting ATFA documents can be found on our website www.cleverchoice.com.au