



Grade Guidelines

EFFECTIVE : 07-2026





THE original PREFINISHED WOOD FLOORING

Proudly made in North America

Mercier is the pioneer in manufacturing prefinished wood flooring.

Our goal, which stemmed from a visionary and practical need to eliminate on-site finishing of wood floors, was the springboard to our culture of innovation. Dust from sanding, drying times and emissions in the home are now inconveniences of the past thanks to the bold, creative drive that transformed the industry over four decades ago.

It is thanks to this culture of innovation, which permeates throughout everything Mercier does, that we have developed a renowned mastery of wood itself, the science of surface finishing, and wood flooring design. Mercier's relentless pursuit to offer the very best of wood and our uncompromising reverence for it—from its inherent properties, nobility and authenticity—is what has enabled us to carve an enviable legacy that can never be equalled.

There can only be one original. Mercier.



Important notice

Mercier's mission is to walk consumers through the process of choosing a new floor. In this Grade Guidelines, you'll find all the characteristics of each grade and species of wood in the Mercier product line.

Note that the images appearing in this guide are for illustrative purposes only. A printed brochure can never accurately reproduce all the variations and subtleties of wood colors and textures, so please always refer to natural samples.

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Grade selection

The grade classifies the wood boards based on their appearance. As each board is unique, we group them according to the color variations and character marks that determine the appearance of your floor.

If you prefer a clean, uniform appearance with little variation and very few character marks, you will most likely opt for the Select & Better grade. If you prefer pronounced color variations, the Authentic grade will definitely be your first choice. If moderate variations are more to your taste, the Distinction grade will be your best option.



It should be noted that a product of the same grade and species may have more important character marks in size and number according to the increase of its width.

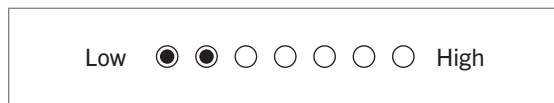
Red Oak

Grain and color

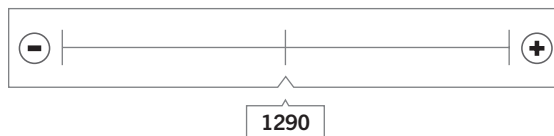
Red Oak is an open grain, ring-porous species that's characterized by visible, well defined growth rings. Tones range from pinkish beige to reddish brown.

Wood oxidation

Red Oak moderately changes color over time, acquiring a slightly amber hue.



Janka Hardness Scale



Red Oak

Select & Better

(including Emblem Collection)

Light, even appearance with slight color variations between boards. This grade showcases the sapwood’s natural tones, from pinkish beige to light brown. Pronounced contrasts in the same board are not allowed in this grade.



Knots

Sound pin knots are accepted.
Limited in number.

Splits and checks

Splits and checks are not accepted.
(see reference image on page 32)



Streaks

Small mineral streaks are accepted.
Limited in number.



Red Oak

Distinction

This grade's rich appearance and moderate contrasts are the result of a balanced selection of the species' natural tones, ranging from pinkish beige to medium brown. Light to moderate variation between boards.



Knots

Small sounds and repaired knots are accepted.
Limited in number and diameter.

Splits and checks

Splits are not accepted in this grade.
Occasional surface checks are accepted.
(see reference image on page 32)



Streaks

Small mineral streaks of any length are allowed.
Limited in number.



Red Oak

PRO

The contrasting appearance of this grade represents a mix of the species’ natural full-bodied tones. Moderate variation between boards.



> **Knots**
Sound knots and knots filled with wood putty are accepted without limitation. Openings in and around knots are accepted.

Splits and checks
Occasional surface checks and occasional end splits are accepted in this grade.
(see reference image on page 32)



> **Streaks**
Mineral streaks are accepted without limitation.

Other characteristics
Occasional sticker stains are accepted.



Red Oak

Authentic

The contrasting appearance of this grade represents a mix of the species’ natural full-bodied tones. Moderate to pronounced variation between boards.

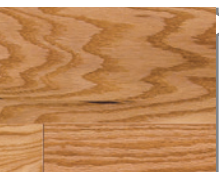


Knots

Sound knots and knots filled with wood putty (including slight openings or depressions) are accepted without limitation. Small openings in and around knots are accepted.

Splits and checks

Surface splits and checks and end splits are accepted. (see reference image on page 32)



Streaks

Mineral streaks are accepted without limitation.

Other characteristics

Varnish cracks around character marks are accepted.



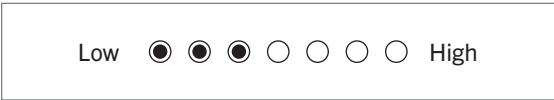
Hard Maple

Grain and color

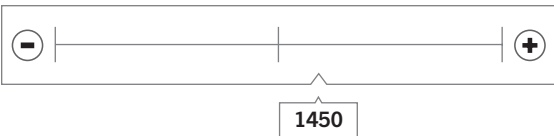
Hard Maple has a fine and even-textured grain. Growth rings are narrow and lightly contrasted. Color variations range from the sapwood's whitish beige to a full-bodied brown, making it the lightest-toned hardwood species.

Wood oxidation

Hard Maple undergoes a moderate change in color over time, acquiring a golden hue.



Janka Hardness Scale



Hard Maple

Select & Better

Light, even appearance, with slight color variations between boards. This grade showcases the sapwood’s natural tones, ranging from creamy white to very light brown. Pronounced contrasts within a single board are not allowed in this grade.



Knots

Sound pin knots are accepted.
Limited in number.

Splits and checks

Splits and checks are not accepted.
(see reference image on page 32)



Streaks

Small mineral streaks are accepted.
Limited in number.



Hard Maple

Distinction

This grade's rich, moderately contrasted appearance is the result of a balanced selection of the species' natural tones, ranging from creamy white to medium brown. Light to moderate variation between boards.



> **Knots**
Small sound and repaired knots are accepted.
Limited in number and diameter.

Splits and checks
Splits are not accepted in this grade.
Occasional surface checks are accepted.
(see reference image on page 32)



> **Streaks**
Small mineral streaks of any length are allowed.
Limited in number.



Hard Maple

PRO

The contrasting appearance of this grade represents a mix of the species’ natural full-bodied tones. Moderate variation between boards.



> **Knots**
Sound knots and knots filled with wood putty are accepted without limitation. Small openings in and around knots are accepted.

Splits and checks
Occasional surface checks and occasional end splits are accepted in this grade.
(see reference image on page 32)



> **Streaks**
Mineral streaks are accepted without limitation.

Other characteristics
Occasional sticker stains are accepted.



Hard Maple

Authentic

This grade is high in contrasts, reflecting the full range of vivid natural tones found in the species. Moderate to pronounced variation between boards.



Knots

Sound knots and knots filled with wood putty (including slight openings or depressions) are accepted without limitation. Openings in and around knots are accepted.

Splits and checks

Surface splits and checks and end splits are accepted in this grade. (see reference image on page 32)



Streaks

Mineral streaks are accepted without limitation.

Other characteristics

Varnish cracks around character marks are accepted in this grade.



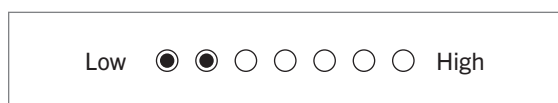
White Oak

Grain and color

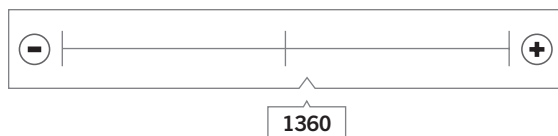
White Oak has an open grain and is ring porous, with visible, well-defined growth rings, similar to Red Oak. The tones range from creamy light beige to greyish brown.

Wood oxidation

White Oak undergoes a moderate change in color over time, acquiring an amber hue.



Janka Hardness Scale



White Oak

Distinction (Stellar Collection)

This grade's rich, moderately contrasting appearance is the result of a balanced mix of all the species' natural tones, from creamy beige to vivid brown. Moderate variation between boards.



Knots

Sound knots and knots filled with wood putty (including slight openings or depressions) are accepted without limitation. Openings in and around knots are accepted.



Streaks

Mineral streaks are accepted without limitation.

Other characteristics

Varnish cracks around character marks are accepted in this grade.

Splits and checks

Surface splits and checks and end splits are accepted in this grade. Splits filled with wood putty are accepted.
(see reference image on page 32)



Picture : White Oak Celeste Distinction grade, from the Stellar Collection

White Oak

Authentic (Stellar Collection)

Featuring distinct contrasts, this grade is the result of a balanced mix of all the species' natural tones, from creamy beige to vivid brown.



Knots

Sound knots and knots filled with wood putty (including slight openings or depressions) are accepted without limitation. Openings in and around knots are accepted.



Streaks

Mineral streaks are accepted without limitation.

Other characteristics

Varnish cracks around character marks are accepted in this grade.

Splits and checks

Surface splits and checks and end splits are accepted in this grade. Splits filled with wood putty are accepted.

(see reference image on page 32)



Picture : White Oak Celeste Authentic grade, from the Stellar Collection

White Oak

Authentic

This grade's rich, moderately contrasting appearance is the result of a balanced mix of all the species' natural tones, from creamy beige to vivid brown. Moderate variation between boards.



Knots

Sound knots and knots filled with wood putty (including slight openings or depressions) are accepted without limitation. Openings in and around knots are accepted.



Streaks

Mineral streaks are accepted without limitation.

Other characteristics*

Varnish cracks around character marks are accepted in this grade.

**For 6 1/2" boards only*

Splits and checks

Surface splits and checks and end splits are accepted in this grade. (see reference image on page 32)



White Oak

R&Q (rift and quarter sawn)

Uniform and with moderate contrasts, the R&Q grade features a linear single grain, which is distinctive to quarter sawn wood. The coloration is a balanced blend, ranging from cream to golden brown, Light to moderate variation between boards.



> **Knots**
Sound knots and knots repaired with wood putty are accepted in limited amounts. Limited in number.

Splits and checks
Splits are not accepted in this grade. Occasional surface checks are accepted.
(see reference image on page 32)



> **Streaks**
Mineral streaks of any length are allowed.



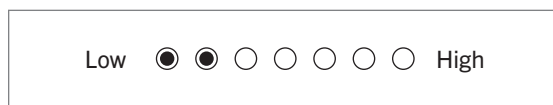
Hickory

Grain and color

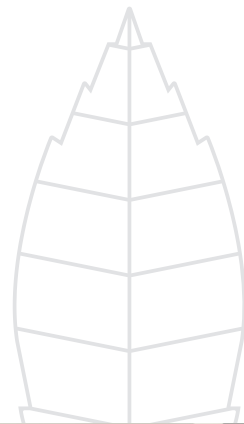
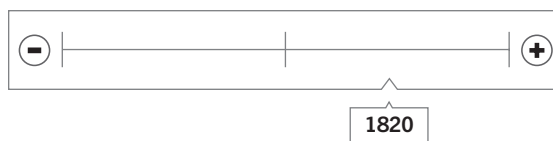
Hickory is a dense, closed-grain wood with visible growth rings. Its color is characterized by a wide range of tones and variations, from golden beige to an intense blackish brown. Prominent character marks give it a rustic, natural look.

Wood oxidation

Hickory undergoes a slight change in color over time, acquiring a golden hue.



Janka Hardness Scale



Hickory

Authentic

This grade is high in tonal contrasts, showcasing the full range of vivid natural colors found in the species. Pronounced variation between boards.



> **Knots**
Sound knots and knots filled with wood putty (including slight openings or depressions) are accepted without limitation. Openings in and around knots are accepted.

Splits and checks
Surface splits and checks and end splits are accepted in this grade. (see reference image on page 32)



> **Streaks**
Mineral streaks are accepted without limitation.

Other characteristics
Varnish cracks around character marks are accepted in this grade.

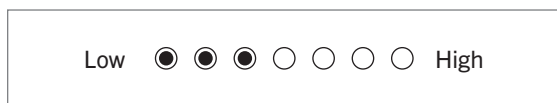


Grain and color

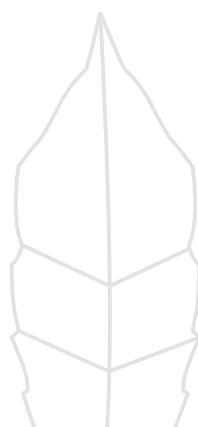
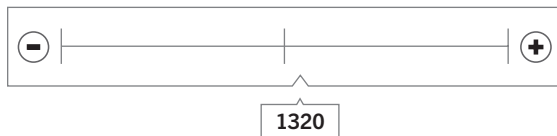
White Ash is ring porous, with visible, well-defined growth rings. Its rich spectrum of colors ranges from creamy white with golden undertones to an intense dark brown.

Wood oxidation

White Ash undergoes a moderate change in color over time, acquiring an amber hue.



Janka Hardness Scale



White Ash

Distinction

This grade’s rich, high-contrast appearance showcases the species’ full range of natural tones, from creamy white to dark brown. Moderate to pronounced variation between boards.



> **Knots**
Sounds and repaired knots are accepted.
Limited in number and diameter.

Splits and checks
Splits are not accepted in this grade.
Occasional surface checks are accepted.
(see reference image on page 32)



> **Streaks**
Small mineral streaks of any length are allowed.
Limited in number.



White Ash

Authentic

The rich and contrasting appearance of this grade represents a mix of the species’ natural full-bodied tones, ranging from creamy white to dark brown. Moderate to pronounced variation between boards.



Knots

Sound knots and knots filled with wood putty (including slight openings or depressions) are accepted without limitation. Openings in and around knots are accepted.

Splits and checks

Surface splits and checks and end splits are accepted in this grade. (see reference image on page 32)



Streaks

Mineral streaks are accepted without limitation.

Other characteristics

Varnish cracks around character marks are accepted in this grade.



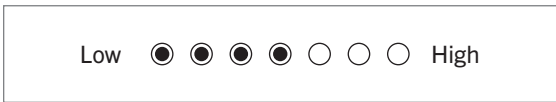
Yellow Birch

Grain and color

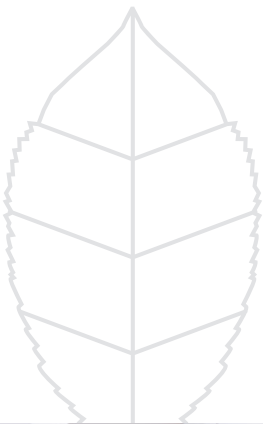
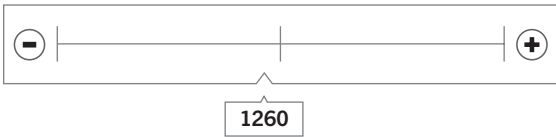
Yellow Birch is straight grained and even textured, with fine, lightly contrasting growth rings. Colors range from the creamy, sometimes pinkish white of the sapwood to an intense reddish brown.

Wood oxidation

Yellow Birch undergoes a moderate change in color over time, acquiring a slightly amber hue.



Janka Hardness Scale



Yellow Birch

Distinction

This grade’s rich, high-contrast appearance showcases the species’ full range of natural tones, from creamy beige to reddish brown. Moderate to pronounced variation between boards.



> **Knots**
Small sound knots and repaired knots are accepted.
Limited in number and diameter..

Splits and checks
Splits are not accepted in this grade.
Occasional surface checks are accepted.
(see reference image on page 32)



> **Streaks**
Small mineral streaks of any length are allowed.
Limited in number.



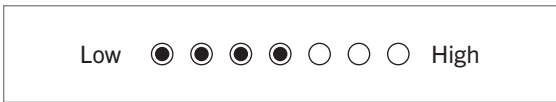
American Walnut

Grain and color

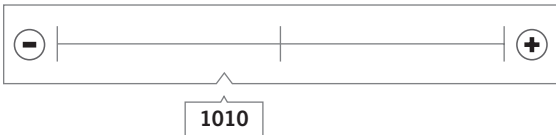
American Walnut has a fine, straight grain. It's characterized by uncommonly deep, rich colors ranging from beige to almost white in the sapwood and light to chocolate brown in the heartwood.

Wood oxidation

Walnut undergoes a moderate change in color over time, turning a lighter, more even golden brown.



Janka Hardness Scale



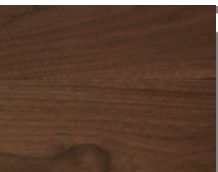
American Walnut

Authentic

This grade’s rich appearance and moderate contrasts reflect the species’ wide range of natural colors, from the beige of the sapwood to chocolate brown. Pronounced variation between boards.



> **Knots**
Sound knots and knots filled with wood putty (including slight openings or depressions) are accepted without limitation. Openings in and around knots are accepted.



> **Streaks**
Mineral streaks are accepted without limitation.

Other characteristics
Varnish cracks around character marks are accepted in this grade. The beige coloration of the sapwood is allowed without limitation.

Splits and checks
Surface splits and checks and end splits are accepted in this grade. Splits filled with wood putty are accepted.
(see reference image on page 32)



Hardwood floor platforms



	SOLID (SOLID WOOD)	ENGINEERED (ENGINEERED WOOD)
NATURE OF MATERIAL	100% HARDWOOD	TOP LAYER: HARDWOOD BASE: HARDWOOD PLYWOOD
SPECIAL FEATURES OF MATERIAL	100% SOLID WOOD NATURAL CHARM	UNBEATABLE STABILITY SUITABLE FOR ALL SURFACES
TYPES OF INSTALLATIONS	NAILED AND STAPLED	NAILED, GLUED, STAPLED*, AND FLOATING*
INSTALLATION IN THE BASEMENT OR ON CONCRETE	NOT RECOMMENDED	POSSIBLE
SANDING	YES: FROM 3 TO 5 TIMES	YES: FROM 3 TO 5 TIMES
SPECIES	HARD MAPLE HICKORY RED OAK WHITE ASH WHITE OAK YELLOW BIRCH	AMERICAN WALNUT HARD MAPLE HICKORY RED OAK WHITE ASH WHITE OAK
GRADE (ACCORDING TO THE SPECIES)	SELECT & BETTER, DISTINCTION, PRO, AUTHENTIC	SELECT & BETTER, DISTINCTION, PRO AUTHENTIC, R&Q
THICKNESS AND WIDTH (ACCORDING TO THE SPECIES)	2 ¼" (57 MM) X ¾" (19 MM) 3 ¼" (83 MM) X ¾" (19 MM) 4 ¼" (108 MM) X ¾" (19 MM)	5" (127 MM) X ½" (12,7 MM) 5" (127 MM) X ¾" (19 MM) 6 ½" (165 MM) X ½" (12,7 MM) 6 ½" (165 MM) X ¾" (19 MM) 7 ½" (190.5 MM) X ½" (12,7 MM) 7 ½" (190.5 MM) X ¾" (19 MM)
LENGTH	RANDOM	RANDOM
HERRINGBONE AVAILABILITY (Suitable for a Herringbone pattern installation only)	NOT AVAILABLE	5" (127 MM) X ½" (12,7 MM) FIXED LENGTHS: 18" (45,7 CM) HARD MAPLE RED OAK WHITE OAK

* REFER TO TECHNICAL BULLETIN # 9
** EXCLUSIONS APPLY. REFER TO THE ENGINEERED INSTALLATION GUIDE.

Types of cuts



Flat sawn

The most common sawing method. It results in a wide variety of colors, with straight and curved patterns, so that each board sawn this way has a unique appearance.



Quarter and rift sawn

A sawing method in which the annual growth rings form a 45° or 90° angle with the surface of the board. This creates a straight-line pattern along the length of the board. When the angle is close to 90° , the result is the wavy perpendicular patterns characteristic of R&Q (rift and quarter sawn) boards.

Glossary

1 Sapwood: The part of the tree located near the outside of the trunk, between the heartwood (duramen) and the bark. It is usually of a lighter color than the heartwood.

2 Heartwood: The part of the tree between the pith and the sapwood. It is usually darker than the sapwood.

3 Hardwood: Generally, one of the botanical groups of deciduous trees that have broad leaves in contrast to the conifers of softwoods. The terms have no reference to the actual hardness of the wood.

4 Annual growth ring: The layer of wood growth, including spring and summerwood, formed on a tree during a single growing season

5 Janka hardness: A hardness test measuring the force required to drive a 0.444" (11.3 mm) steel bearing half its depth into the wood. The more force required, the harder the wood. Red Oak is the industry benchmark for comparing the relative hardness of different wood species.

6 Split: A lengthwise separation of fibres resulting from natural, environmental and/or mechanical pressures. May be at the end of a board or on the surface.

7 Check: A short, narrow, shallow separation of the wood, perpendicular to the annual growth rings. May be located in the centre or at the ends of boards.

8 Grade: The classification of flooring strips based on the natural color and character marks in the wood (mineral streaks, knots, etc.). The grade refers to the appearance of the product.

9 Relative humidity: The ratio of the amount of water vapour present in the air to the amount of water that can be held by that air at a given temperature.

10 Gloss: The gloss level or luster of a surface is determined by the amount of light it reflects. A glossy surface reflects more light than a matte surface.

11 Character marks: Natural "imperfections" in the wood such as mineral streaks, knots and coloration that give the product its unique appearance.

12 Wood oxidation: A natural phenomenon by which the color of wood changes after exposure to air and ambient light. This change varies depending on the species.

13 Micro V-joint: The 45° angle at the junction between the surface and the side of the flooring strips when they are laid side by side. The result is a small "V" shape, whence the name "V-joint."

14 Pith: The soft-surfaced core of a tree trunk or branch.

15 Knot: The portion of a branch embedded in the wood. There are several types of knots, including sound and open knots.

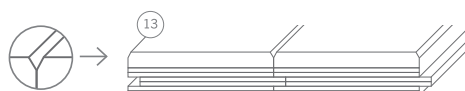
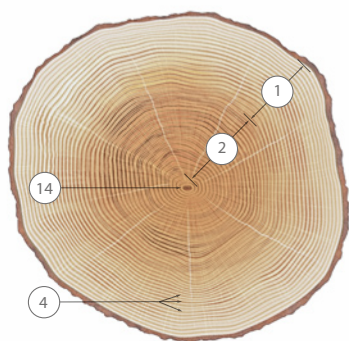
16 Pin knot: A tiny sound knot, less than 1/8" (3.2 mm) in diameter.

17 Open knot: A knot that is open in the centre; it is often filled with wood putty.

18 Engineered wood flooring: A floor made up of a hardwood surface bonded to a substrate.

19 Rays: The cellular structure of the tree extending from the outer part of the tree toward the centre (perpendicular to the annual growth rings).

20 Mineral streak: A general term describing a pigmentation in the wood. This coloration appears in the form of a streak or stain ranging from greenish brown to jet black.





Proudly made in North America

mercierwoodflooring.com



The information contained in this document was accurate at the time of printing. Mercier Wood Flooring Inc. reserves the right to change products and product characteristics at any time without notice.

Please note that the images in this brochure are for illustrative purposes only. A picture cannot represent the extent of character marks, shades, textures and colors in a grade and species. There may be a variation in appearance between the images in this brochure, the sample panel in store and the floor you receive.