

OTTAWA FLOOR INSTALL



# Hardwood Flooring

Solid and engineered hardwood installation, species selection, and installation methods

26 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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Q1

## Why does my new hardwood smell after installation?

**New hardwood flooring odors are completely normal and typically fade within 2-4 weeks after installation.**

The smell comes from natural wood compounds, adhesives, and finishing products used during manufacturing and installation.

**Wood itself contains natural compounds called terpenes and aldehydes** that create that distinctive "new wood" smell. Engineered hardwood may have additional odors from the plywood core and adhesive layers used in manufacturing. If your floors were glued down, construction adhesives can also contribute to the smell during their curing process.

**Pre-finished hardwood floors often have the strongest initial odor** because the factory-applied polyurethane finish continues to off-gas for several weeks after installation. Site-finished floors that were sanded and finished in your home will have already completed most of their off-gassing during the finishing process, though some residual odor may remain.

**In Ottawa's climate, proper ventilation is key to reducing odors quickly.** Open windows when weather permits, run ceiling fans, and maintain good air circulation throughout your home. The dry winter air actually helps accelerate the off-gassing process, though you'll want to maintain proper humidity levels (30-50%) to prevent the wood from shrinking excessively.

**Most hardwood odors are harmless, but strong chemical smells that persist beyond a month or cause headaches should be investigated.** This could indicate adhesive issues or excessive formaldehyde emissions from lower-quality products. Quality hardwood products from reputable manufacturers typically have minimal long-term odor issues.

**The smell should gradually diminish each week.** If you're still experiencing strong odors after 4-6 weeks, contact your flooring contractor to discuss potential solutions or investigate whether there might be moisture issues affecting the adhesive or wood.

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Q2

## Can hardwood be installed perpendicular to joists in every case?

**Hardwood flooring should generally be installed perpendicular to floor joists for maximum structural support and stability.** However, there are important exceptions and considerations that determine when this is

possible or necessary.

### **Structural Requirements and Subfloor Considerations**

The ability to install hardwood perpendicular to joists depends heavily on your subfloor system. With a proper plywood or OSB subfloor (minimum 5/8" thick), you have more flexibility in installation direction because the subfloor provides adequate structural support. However, if you're installing over older board subfloors or have concerns about subfloor deflection, perpendicular installation becomes more critical for preventing squeaks and movement.

### **When Parallel Installation May Be Acceptable**

In some cases, hardwood can be installed parallel to joists if certain conditions are met. This typically requires a thicker subfloor system (3/4" minimum) or additional structural support like blocking between joists. Engineered hardwood with its cross-grain construction is more forgiving than solid hardwood when installed parallel to joists. The key is ensuring your subfloor deflection doesn't exceed  $L/360$  under load, which prevents excessive movement that can cause gaps or squeaking.

### **Ottawa Climate and Installation Considerations**

In Ottawa's climate with significant seasonal humidity changes, proper installation direction becomes even more important for long-term performance. The perpendicular installation helps distribute seasonal expansion and contraction forces more evenly across the joist system. Additionally, many hardwood manufacturers' warranties require perpendicular installation to joists, so deviating from this could void your coverage.

### **Professional Assessment Required**

Every installation is unique, and factors like joist spacing, subfloor thickness, and the specific hardwood product all influence the best approach. A structural assessment may be needed if you're considering parallel installation, especially in older Ottawa homes where joist spacing might be irregular or subfloors may need reinforcement.

For a professional evaluation of your specific subfloor conditions and installation requirements, request a quote from Ottawa Floor Install. We'll assess your joist system and recommend the best installation approach for long-lasting results.

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**Q3**

**The contractor mentioned moisture readings before installing hardwood — how critical is that step?**

**Moisture testing is absolutely critical before hardwood installation** — skipping this step is one of the leading causes of expensive flooring failures, warping, and cupping that can cost thousands to repair.

**Wood moisture content must be properly balanced** with your home's environment before installation. Hardwood should typically be between 6-9% moisture content in Ottawa's climate, and within 2-4% of your subfloor moisture levels. If the wood is too wet or dry compared to your home's conditions, it will expand or contract after installation, causing gaps, cupping, or crowning that destroys the floor's appearance and integrity.

**Your subfloor moisture is equally important** — concrete slabs should read below 4% with a pin meter, and wood subfloors should be within that 2-4% range of your hardwood. High subfloor moisture can indicate plumbing leaks, poor vapor barriers, or basement humidity issues that need addressing before any flooring goes down. In Ottawa's climate with our cold winters and humid summers, these readings can vary significantly throughout the year.

**Professional contractors use calibrated pin and pinless moisture meters** to get accurate readings at multiple locations. They'll also check for seasonal variations and ensure your HVAC system has been running to establish normal living conditions. This testing typically adds 30-60 minutes to the pre-installation process but prevents problems that could require complete floor replacement.

**The acclimation period works hand-in-hand with moisture testing** — your hardwood needs 3-7 days in your home to adjust to local conditions before installation. A reputable contractor will never skip these steps, as they're essential for warranty coverage and long-term performance.

For a free estimate that includes proper moisture testing and acclimation planning, request a quote from Ottawa Floor Install.

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#### Q4

## Should hardwood run the same direction on every floor?

**Hardwood direction should generally be consistent throughout your home for the best visual flow and highest resale value.** Running planks in the same direction creates continuity and makes spaces feel larger and more cohesive.

The **standard approach is to run hardwood parallel to the longest wall** in your main living area, then maintain that direction throughout connecting rooms. This creates clean sight lines and prevents the choppy appearance that comes from changing directions between rooms. When you walk through your home, the consistent grain direction guides your eye naturally from space to space.

**There are practical exceptions** where direction changes make sense. Different levels of your home (upstairs vs. main floor) can have different directions since they're visually separated. You might also change direction when moving between distinctly separate areas - like from the main living space to a hallway that leads to bedrooms. Some homeowners choose to run hardwood perpendicular in dining rooms to define the space, though this works best when there's a clear transition like a doorway.

**In Ottawa's housing market**, consistent hardwood direction is particularly valued in open-concept homes and century homes with connected rooms. The visual continuity helps showcase the quality of your flooring investment. However, your subfloor structure may influence direction - sometimes it's better to run perpendicular to floor joists for added stability, especially in older Ottawa homes.

**Consider your home's natural light flow** as well. Running planks toward your main light source (usually large windows) can enhance the wood grain and make rooms appear brighter. The key is planning the entire main floor layout before installation begins.

For a professional assessment of the best hardwood direction for your specific Ottawa home layout, request a consultation with Ottawa Floor Install to ensure optimal results.

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#### Q5

## Our kitchen dishwasher leaked last year and now a few hardwood boards are slightly darker — is that surface damage or rot underneath?

**Darker hardwood boards from dishwasher leaks typically indicate water penetration into the wood, which can range from surface staining to deeper moisture damage that may lead to rot if not addressed.**

The darkening you're seeing is likely **water staining** where moisture has penetrated the wood fibers and finish. Since this happened a year ago, the immediate concern is whether the moisture was fully dried out or if it's created conditions for **mold growth or wood rot** underneath the surface. Even if the boards feel solid now, trapped moisture can cause ongoing damage to both the hardwood and the subfloor beneath.

**Professional assessment is crucial** because what appears as surface discoloration often extends deeper than visible. A licensed flooring contractor can use moisture meters to check if elevated moisture levels remain in the affected boards and subfloor. They'll also inspect for signs of mold, soft spots, or early rot that aren't immediately obvious. In Ottawa's climate, trapped moisture in flooring systems can create ongoing problems even months after the initial leak.

The repair approach depends on the extent of damage. **Surface staining** might be addressed through sanding and refinishing those specific boards. However, if moisture penetrated to the subfloor or if any boards show signs of rot, those sections will need complete replacement. The subfloor may also require treatment or replacement if it was compromised.

**Don't wait to have this evaluated** - moisture damage in hardwood flooring typically worsens over time, and what starts as cosmetic staining can develop into structural issues requiring more extensive repairs. For a professional moisture assessment and repair estimate, request a consultation from Ottawa Floor Install to determine the full scope of the damage and prevent future problems.

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Q6

## Our hardwood boards near the fireplace look dried out — can heat sources damage them?

**Yes, heat sources like fireplaces can definitely damage hardwood floors** by causing the wood to dry out, shrink, and potentially crack or split. Wood naturally expands and contracts with humidity changes, and the intense, dry heat from fireplaces accelerates moisture loss from nearby boards.

**Direct heat exposure** creates several problems for hardwood flooring. The boards closest to the fireplace experience rapid moisture loss, causing them to shrink more than the surrounding floor. This creates unsightly gaps between boards and can lead to cupping (edges higher than centers) or even cracking along the grain. The finish can also become dull, chalky, or develop micro-cracks from the constant heating and cooling cycles.

**Radiant heat from the hearth and surrounding masonry** continues affecting your floors even after the fire dies down. Stone or brick hearths retain heat for hours, creating a prolonged drying effect. This is particularly

problematic during Ottawa's winter months when indoor humidity levels are already low from forced-air heating systems.

**Protecting your hardwood** requires maintaining proper humidity levels (30-50%) and creating barriers between the heat source and flooring. A decorative area rug can provide insulation, while a humidifier helps maintain consistent moisture levels throughout your home. Ensure your fireplace screen extends adequately to prevent direct heat exposure, and consider having your floors professionally inspected if you notice significant gaps or surface damage.

**Professional refinishing** may be needed if the damage is extensive. The affected boards might require sanding and refinishing, or in severe cases, board replacement. For a thorough assessment of heat damage to your hardwood floors, Ottawa Floor Install offers free consultations to determine the best restoration approach for your specific situation.

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Q7

## What are the differences between hardwood and engineered hardwood flooring?

**Hardwood and engineered hardwood differ primarily in construction, with solid hardwood being one piece of wood throughout, while engineered hardwood features a real wood veneer over a plywood or composite core.** Both offer the beauty of natural wood, but each has distinct advantages for different situations.

**Solid hardwood flooring** is milled from a single piece of wood, typically 3/4" thick. This traditional option can be sanded and refinished multiple times throughout its lifespan - often 3-5 refinishing cycles or more depending on the wood species and wear layer thickness. Solid hardwood must be nailed down to a wooden subfloor and requires careful moisture control, making it unsuitable for basements or concrete slabs in Ottawa's climate. The natural expansion and contraction with seasonal humidity changes is more pronounced, requiring proper acclimation and installation techniques.

**Engineered hardwood** consists of 2-7 layers with a real wood top layer (typically 2-6mm thick) bonded to a stable plywood or high-density fiberboard core. This construction makes it more dimensionally stable and suitable for installation over concrete, radiant heating systems, and below-grade applications like finished basements. Engineered flooring can be installed as a floating floor, glued down, or nailed down depending on the product. While it can typically be refinished 1-2 times (depending on veneer thickness), it won't last as long as solid hardwood.

**In Ottawa's climate**, engineered hardwood often performs better due to our significant seasonal humidity swings. The cross-grain construction resists expansion and contraction, reducing gaps and cupping issues common with solid hardwood during dry winter months. For homes with radiant heating or concrete subfloors, engineered is often the only viable option.

**Cost-wise in the Ottawa market**, engineered hardwood installation typically runs \$8-14 per square foot, while solid hardwood ranges from \$10-18 per square foot. The long-term value equation depends on your plans - solid hardwood wins for permanent installations, while engineered offers more versatility and immediate stability.

For a free estimate comparing both options for your specific Ottawa home, request a quote from Ottawa Floor Install to discuss which choice best suits your subfloor, lifestyle, and budget.

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Q8

## We're renovating a 1960s bungalow in the Glebe and want to match the original oak floors - is that possible?

**Yes, matching original 1960s oak floors is definitely possible**, though it requires careful attention to species, grade, and finishing techniques to achieve a seamless blend with your existing flooring.

Most 1960s bungalows in the Glebe feature **red oak strip flooring**, typically 2¼" wide with a select or common grade. The original floors were likely finished with oil-based polyurethane that has developed a warm amber patina over 60+ years. To match this look, you'll need to source similar red oak planks and use staining techniques that replicate the aged appearance.

**The key challenge is matching the color and sheen level.** Your existing floors have likely darkened naturally over decades, so new oak will appear much lighter initially. A skilled flooring contractor can create custom stain blends to match the existing color, often using a combination of golden oak and amber tones. The new sections should be sanded to match the existing floor's sheen level - many 1960s floors now have a worn, semi-gloss appearance rather than the original high gloss.

**For Glebe renovations, consider the home's character** when selecting materials. If you're extending into areas that didn't originally have hardwood, you might choose to refinish the entire main floor for perfect consistency. This approach is common in heritage neighborhoods where maintaining period authenticity matters.

**Subfloor considerations are crucial** in 1960s homes - ensure your contractor checks for proper moisture barriers and subfloor stability before installation. The original subfloor may need reinforcement to meet current standards.

For a seamless match in your Glebe renovation, request a consultation with experienced hardwood specialists who can assess your existing floors and create a custom matching plan.

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Q9

## How many times can my 3/4 inch solid oak floors be sanded before they're too thin?

**Solid 3/4 inch oak flooring can typically be sanded 3-5 times** over its lifetime, depending on how much wood is removed with each refinishing and the specific board construction.

With proper professional sanding techniques, each refinishing removes approximately 1/32 to 1/16 inch of wood from the surface. Since you need to maintain at least 1/8 to 3/16 inch of wood above the tongue-and-groove joint for structural integrity, this leaves you with roughly 1/2 to 5/8 inch of "sandable" wood on a standard 3/4 inch solid oak floor.

**The key factor is sanding technique and equipment.** Professional contractors using modern dustless sanders with proper grit progression (starting with 36-40 grit for heavy work, finishing with 100-120 grit) remove less wood per refinishing than older drum sanders or aggressive DIY approaches. Deep scratches, pet stains, or water damage may require more aggressive sanding, reducing the total number of future refinishings possible.

**In Ottawa's climate**, solid oak floors often last 80-100 years with proper maintenance and periodic refinishing every 10-15 years. Between full refinishings, you can extend the floor's life with screen-and-recoat services that only remove the finish layer, not the wood itself. This maintenance approach can double the time between major refinishings.

**Signs your floor is getting thin** include visible nail heads, splintering edges, or gaps appearing between boards after sanding. A professional assessment can measure remaining wood thickness and recommend whether another refinishing is advisable. For floors nearing their sanding limit, a buff-and-recoat or even board replacement of heavily worn areas might be better options than full refinishing.

For a professional assessment of your oak floors' remaining life, Ottawa Floor Install can evaluate the wood thickness and recommend the best refinishing approach for your specific situation.

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## Q10

### How long does hardwood flooring need to acclimate before installation in Ottawa's winter?

**Hardwood flooring typically needs 3-7 days to acclimate in Ottawa homes during winter**, though this can extend to 10-14 days depending on the species and your home's humidity levels.

**Winter acclimation is especially critical in Ottawa** because of our extreme temperature swings and dry indoor air from heating systems. Most Ottawa homes drop to 15-25% relative humidity in winter (compared to 30-50% in summer), which can cause significant wood movement if flooring isn't properly conditioned. The wood needs time to reach equilibrium with your home's moisture content before installation.

**Engineered hardwood generally requires 3-5 days**, while solid hardwood often needs 5-7 days minimum. Wider planks (5+ inches) and certain species like maple or hickory may need up to two weeks. The flooring should be stored in the room where it will be installed, with boxes opened and stickers placed between boards to allow air circulation. Your home should be at normal living conditions (18-22°C, ideally with a humidifier running) during this entire period.

**Professional moisture testing is essential** before installation begins. Licensed contractors use pin-type and pinless moisture meters to verify both the subfloor (should be under 12%) and hardwood (typically 6-9% in Ottawa winters) are within acceptable ranges. Installing without proper acclimation can lead to significant gaps, cupping, or crowning once heating season ends.

**The investment in proper acclimation time prevents costly callbacks** and ensures your hardwood performs beautifully through Ottawa's seasonal humidity changes. For a professional assessment of your specific project and proper acclimation guidance, request a quote from Ottawa Floor Install.

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## Q11

### Does laminate flooring feel colder underfoot compared to hardwood in winter?

**Laminate flooring does tend to feel slightly colder underfoot than hardwood in winter**, but the difference is often less noticeable than many homeowners expect, especially with quality laminate and proper underlayment.

The temperature difference comes down to **thermal conductivity** - how quickly materials transfer heat away from your feet. Laminate flooring has a thin wear layer over a high-density fiberboard (HDF) core, which conducts heat away from your feet more readily than solid wood. However, engineered hardwood (which has similar construction

to laminate) feels very comparable to laminate underfoot.

**Quality underlayment makes a significant difference** in how warm laminate feels. Premium foam or cork underlayments provide better thermal insulation, reducing that cold sensation. In Ottawa's climate, many homeowners choose underlayments with built-in moisture barriers and thermal properties specifically for comfort during our long winters.

**Practical considerations for Ottawa homes** include the fact that laminate is often installed over concrete subfloors in basements, which naturally feel colder. However, laminate's waterproof properties make it ideal for these areas where solid hardwood wouldn't be suitable. Many homeowners find that area rugs in high-traffic zones effectively address any temperature concerns.

The **maintenance advantages of laminate** - no seasonal expansion/contraction issues, resistance to salt damage from winter boots, and easy cleanup of snow and slush - often outweigh the minor temperature difference for Ottawa families. Modern laminate also works well with radiant heating systems if you want the ultimate in winter comfort.

For a comparison of flooring options suited to Ottawa's climate and your specific comfort preferences, Ottawa Floor Install can help you evaluate samples and discuss underlayment options during a free consultation.

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## Q12

### Is real hardwood still worth it in 2026, or should I just get good LVP?

**Real hardwood is absolutely still worth it in 2026**, especially in Ottawa's housing market where it adds significant resale value and long-term durability that LVP simply can't match. However, the "right" choice depends on your specific situation, budget, and lifestyle needs.

**Hardwood's lasting advantages** include the ability to refinish multiple times over decades (potentially lasting 50-100+ years), genuine wood grain variation that never repeats, and substantial home value appreciation. In Ottawa's competitive real estate market, quality hardwood flooring remains a top buyer preference and typically recoups 70-80% of installation costs in home value. The feel underfoot is distinctly solid and substantial, and hardwood actually improves with age when properly maintained.

**Modern LVP has genuinely impressive qualities** - today's rigid core products are 100% waterproof, incredibly durable, and the visual quality has reached near-photorealistic levels. Installation costs run \$5-12 per square foot versus \$10-20 for hardwood, and there's no acclimation period or refinishing requirements. For busy families, pet owners, or basement installations, premium LVP offers practical advantages that hardwood can't match.

**Consider hardwood if** you're planning to stay long-term (5+ years), want maximum resale value, have a higher budget (\$8,000-15,000 for an average Ottawa home), and don't mind periodic maintenance. **Choose quality LVP if** you need waterproof flooring, have pets or young children, want lower upfront costs, or are in a rental/flip property.

The sweet spot for many Ottawa homeowners is engineered hardwood in main living areas with LVP in bathrooms, basements, and mudrooms. For a free consultation to discuss which option best fits your specific home and lifestyle, Ottawa Floor Install can help you weigh the pros and cons based on your actual space and needs.

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### Q13

## Hardwood vs. laminate vs. vinyl - what's actually the best value for resale?

**Hardwood flooring typically provides the best resale value**, with quality engineered or solid hardwood adding 2-5% to your home's value in Ottawa's market. However, the "best value" depends on your specific situation and timeline.

**Hardwood flooring** remains the gold standard for resale value because buyers perceive it as premium and long-lasting. Engineered hardwood (\$8-14/sq ft installed) offers nearly the same resale benefit as solid hardwood (\$10-18/sq ft) but at a lower cost. Real estate agents consistently report that homes with hardwood floors sell faster and for higher prices. The key advantage is longevity - quality hardwood can be refinished multiple times over decades, making it a true long-term investment.

**High-end luxury vinyl plank (LVP)** has gained significant ground in recent years and now offers surprisingly good resale value, especially in Ottawa's market where practicality matters. Premium LVP (\$6-12/sq ft installed) that closely mimics hardwood can appeal to buyers who want the look without the maintenance concerns. It's particularly valuable in basements, bathrooms, and homes with pets or young children. The waterproof nature is a major selling point for Ottawa buyers concerned about moisture.

**Laminate flooring** (\$4-10/sq ft installed) provides the least resale value of the three options. While modern laminate looks much better than older versions, buyers still perceive it as a budget option. However, if you're planning to sell within 3-5 years and need to update flooring on a tight budget, quality laminate can still provide a positive return on investment by making your home more marketable.

In Ottawa's climate, consider that hardwood requires more maintenance and humidity control, while vinyl offers worry-free durability. For maximum resale value, engineered hardwood in main living areas with luxury vinyl in moisture-prone areas often provides the best of both worlds.

For a free consultation on which flooring option makes the most sense for your specific home and resale timeline, Ottawa Floor Install can help you weigh the investment against potential returns.

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### Q14

## Is it cheaper to refinish my existing hardwood or install new engineered wood flooring in Orleans?

**Refinishing your existing hardwood is typically 40-60% less expensive than installing new engineered flooring,** making it the more cost-effective option if your current floors are in good structural condition.

**Cost comparison for Orleans projects:** Hardwood refinishing runs \$3-6 per square foot, while new engineered hardwood installation costs \$8-14 per square foot. For a typical 1,000 square foot main floor, you're looking at \$3,000-6,000 for refinishing versus \$8,000-14,000 for new engineered flooring. The savings become even more significant when you factor in that refinishing doesn't require disposing of your existing floors or purchasing new materials.

**However, refinishing only makes sense if your hardwood has sufficient thickness remaining.** Solid hardwood floors can typically be refinished 3-7 times depending on the original thickness and previous refinishing history. If your floors have deep gouges, extensive water damage, or have been refinished multiple times already, replacement might be your only viable option. Engineered hardwood with a thick wear layer (4mm+) can usually be refinished once or twice.

**Orleans homes built in the 1990s and early 2000s often have quality hardwood** that's excellent for refinishing, while newer homes may have thinner engineered products or lower-grade materials. The dustless sanding systems used by professional contractors make refinishing much cleaner than in the past, with most projects completed in 2-3 days including drying time.

**To determine the best option for your specific floors,** have a licensed flooring contractor assess the thickness, condition, and species of your existing hardwood. They can test sand a small area to show you the potential results and help you decide between refinishing and replacement based on your budget and desired outcome.

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Q15

## **What width hardwood planks work best for a narrow townhouse hallway in Stittsville?**

**For narrow townhouse hallways in Stittsville, 3-inch to 4-inch wide hardwood planks typically work best,** as they create better visual proportion without overwhelming the space or making it feel even narrower.

**Plank width significantly impacts how spacious a narrow hallway feels.** Wider planks (5+ inches) can make a narrow hallway appear cramped and choppy, while very narrow planks (2.25 inches) can create a busy, cluttered look. The 3-4 inch range strikes the right balance - wide enough to feel modern and substantial, but not so wide that they dominate the limited floor space. This width also works well with the typical 42-48 inch width of most townhouse hallways.

**In Stittsville's newer townhouse developments, engineered hardwood in these widths is particularly popular** because it handles the concrete subfloors common in these homes better than solid wood. The 3-inch width also tends to be more cost-effective, with installed prices ranging from \$8-12 per square foot for quality engineered hardwood. Many homeowners choose slightly wider 4-inch planks for a more contemporary look, though this adds about \$1-2 per square foot to the project cost.

**Consider the plank length as well - longer planks (up to 7 feet) help create visual flow down the hallway,** making it appear longer and less choppy. Avoid very short planks (under 3 feet) as they'll make the space feel fragmented. The grain direction should run lengthwise down the hallway to enhance the sense of length and flow.

For a professional assessment of your specific hallway dimensions and subfloor conditions, Ottawa Floor Install can provide recommendations tailored to your Stittsville townhouse layout and help you select the optimal plank size for both aesthetics and performance.

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## Q16

### How much extra should I budget for stair treads and risers with my hardwood installation?

**Stair treads and risers will typically add \$80-150 per step** to your hardwood flooring project, depending on the wood species and complexity of your staircase.

**Stair tread pricing** in the Ottawa market ranges from \$80-120 for standard oak treads, \$100-130 for maple or birch, and \$120-150+ for exotic species like Brazilian cherry or walnut. **Risers** add another \$30-50 per step if you're installing hardwood risers instead of painting them. A typical 13-step staircase (main floor to second floor) would add \$1,040-1,950 to your project cost.

The installation complexity significantly affects pricing. **Straight staircases** are most affordable, while **curved or winding stairs** require custom cutting and fitting, potentially adding 25-50% to the per-step cost. **Bullnose treads** (rounded front edge) cost \$10-20 more per step than square-edge treads but provide a more finished appearance. If your existing stairs need structural work or the stringers require modification, expect additional carpentry costs of \$200-500.

**Material considerations** play a crucial role in your budget. Pre-finished treads offer consistency with your floor but limit species options, while **site-finished treads** can be made from your actual flooring material for a perfect match but require additional finishing time. **Retrofit treads** (designed to go over existing stairs) are often more cost-effective than full replacement, saving \$20-40 per step in labor costs.

Most Ottawa contractors include **basic stair nose molding** in their flooring quotes, but full stair renovation is typically quoted separately. For an accurate estimate on your specific staircase configuration, request a quote from Ottawa Floor Install - we provide detailed breakdowns for both flooring and stair work.

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## Q17

### How much does it cost to install hardwood flooring in a 1,200 square foot home in Ottawa?

**Hardwood flooring installation in a 1,200 square foot Ottawa home typically ranges from \$9,600 to \$24,000, depending on the type of hardwood and complexity of the installation.**

For **engineered hardwood**, which is the most popular choice for Ottawa homes, you're looking at \$8-\$14 per square foot installed. This puts your total project cost between \$9,600-\$16,800 for 1,200 square feet. Engineered

hardwood performs well in Ottawa's climate with seasonal humidity changes and offers excellent value with faster installation times.

**Solid hardwood installation** runs \$10-\$18 per square foot, bringing your total to \$12,000-\$21,600. Premium or exotic species like Brazilian cherry, walnut, or wide-plank options can reach \$15-\$25 per square foot (\$18,000-\$30,000 total). The higher cost reflects the material quality, longer installation time, and need for nail-down installation over properly prepared subfloors.

**Additional costs to factor in** include subfloor preparation (\$2-\$6 per square foot if needed), transitions and trim work (\$200-\$800), and potential furniture moving. Ottawa's older homes often require subfloor leveling or moisture barrier installation, which can add \$1,000-\$3,000 to the project. Most installations also include removal of existing flooring, which is typically included in contractor quotes.

**Climate considerations** are crucial in Ottawa - proper acclimation of hardwood materials and moisture testing of subfloors prevents seasonal movement issues. Licensed contractors will factor in Ottawa's humidity swings and ensure proper expansion gaps around the perimeter.

For an accurate quote on your specific 1,200 square foot project, request a free estimate from Ottawa Floor Install. We'll assess your subfloor conditions, discuss material options, and provide detailed pricing for your home's unique layout.

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**Q18**

## **What is the price difference between red oak and white oak hardwood installation in Ottawa?**

**Red oak and white oak hardwood typically have a \$1-3 per square foot price difference in Ottawa, with white oak being the more expensive option.** This translates to roughly \$100-300 more per 100 square feet for white oak installation.

**Red oak** is the more traditional and readily available option in the Ottawa market, typically running \$10-15 per square foot installed for solid hardwood and \$8-12 for engineered. Red oak has been the standard North American hardwood for decades, making it easier to source and generally less expensive. It has a more pronounced grain pattern and tends to have a slightly pinkish undertone.

**White oak** commands a premium price of \$12-18 per square foot installed for solid and \$10-14 for engineered hardwood. White oak is considered more desirable for several reasons: it's harder and more durable than red oak (higher Janka hardness rating), has better moisture resistance, and features a more subtle grain pattern with cooler

gray undertones that work better with contemporary design trends. The tighter grain structure also makes white oak the preferred choice for water-based finishes.

**In Ottawa's current market**, the price difference also reflects demand - white oak has become increasingly popular for modern and transitional home designs, while red oak is often chosen for traditional or rustic aesthetics. Both species are excellent choices that will last decades with proper installation and maintenance. The subfloor preparation, installation labor, and finishing costs remain the same regardless of which oak species you choose.

**Your final decision** should balance budget considerations with your design preferences and the existing style of your home. Both species offer excellent durability and can be refinished multiple times over their lifespan. For a free estimate comparing both options for your specific project, request a quote from Ottawa Floor Install to see current pricing and availability.

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Q19

## Can we still get real hardwood flooring in a downtown Ottawa highrise if our condo board requires floating floors?

**Yes, you can absolutely get real hardwood flooring in your downtown Ottawa highrise with a floating floor requirement.** Engineered hardwood is your best option - it's real wood with a solid hardwood top layer that can be installed as a floating floor.

**Engineered hardwood floating installation** uses a click-lock or tongue-and-groove system where planks connect to each other rather than being nailed to the subfloor. This method significantly reduces sound transmission to units below, which is why most Ottawa condo boards require it. The planks "float" over an acoustic underlayment that further dampens sound and provides moisture protection - crucial in high-rise buildings where concrete slabs can have moisture issues.

**For downtown Ottawa condos**, engineered hardwood offers several advantages over solid hardwood. It's more dimensionally stable in the controlled climate of high-rise buildings, handles minor moisture fluctuations better, and the floating installation won't void your building's structural warranties. You'll get the same authentic wood appearance, grain patterns, and even the ability to refinish the surface 1-2 times depending on the wear layer thickness.

**Quality engineered hardwood options** include 3/4" thick planks with 4-6mm wear layers that look and feel identical to solid hardwood. Popular species like oak, maple, and walnut are readily available, and you can choose from various widths and finishes. The acoustic underlayment required by most condo boards actually improves the feel underfoot compared to direct-glue installations.

**Installation in Ottawa high-rises** typically costs \$8-15 per square foot for engineered hardwood with proper acoustic underlayment. Make sure your contractor is familiar with condo board requirements and uses appropriate moisture barriers over concrete subfloors. For a free estimate on engineered hardwood installation that meets your condo board's floating floor requirements, request a quote from Ottawa Floor Install.

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Q20

## Can previously painted hardwood floors be restored?

**Yes, previously painted hardwood floors can absolutely be restored**, though the process requires professional equipment and expertise to safely remove the paint and reveal the wood underneath.

**Paint removal from hardwood floors** involves aggressive sanding with commercial-grade equipment, starting with coarse grits (36-60 grit) to cut through the paint layers and gradually working up to finer grits (100-120 grit) for smoothing. The key challenge is that paint often penetrates into the wood grain, especially on older floors where the paint may have soaked in over decades. Professional contractors use dustless sanding systems to contain the debris and potential lead dust from older paint.

**The success of restoration depends heavily on the wood species and paint penetration.** Dense hardwoods like oak, maple, and cherry typically restore beautifully because their tight grain prevents deep paint penetration. Softer woods like pine may show more staining where paint has soaked deeper into the grain. In Ottawa's older homes, many painted floors are actually high-quality hardwood that was simply painted over during renovations in the 1970s-80s when carpet was popular.

**Lead paint considerations are crucial in Ottawa homes built before 1978.** Professional contractors must follow strict protocols for lead-safe work practices, including containment, specialized equipment, and proper disposal. This adds to the project cost but ensures family safety. The paint removal process typically takes 2-3 days for an average room, followed by staining and finishing.

**Expect restoration costs of \$6-10 per square foot** in the Ottawa market, which includes paint removal, sanding, staining, and finishing. While more expensive than standard refinishing (\$3-6/sq ft), it's often much less costly than installing new hardwood flooring (\$10-20/sq ft). The results can be stunning, revealing beautiful wood character that's been hidden for decades.

For a professional assessment of your painted hardwood floors and restoration options, Ottawa Floor Install offers free consultations to determine the best approach for your specific situation.

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Q21

## Is nail-down or glue-down better for hardwood over a plywood subfloor in Nepean?

**Nail-down installation is typically the better choice for hardwood over plywood subfloors in Nepean,** offering superior long-term performance and easier future maintenance. The mechanical fastening creates a more stable floor that can expand and contract naturally with Ottawa's seasonal humidity changes.

**Nail-down advantages** include better subfloor attachment, easier repairs if individual boards are damaged, and the ability to sand and refinish multiple times over the floor's lifetime. This method works exceptionally well with Ottawa's temperature swings from -30°C winters to +30°C summers, as the nails allow the wood to move while

maintaining structural integrity. Most solid hardwood installations over plywood use 15-gauge cleats or staples every 6-8 inches along each board.

**Glue-down installation** has specific applications but fewer advantages over plywood. It's primarily used when you need an extremely quiet floor (like condos with noise restrictions) or when installing engineered hardwood under 1/2 inch thick. However, glue-down floors are more difficult to repair, may telegraph subfloor imperfections, and can be challenging to remove for refinishing.

**For Nepean homes specifically**, nail-down is preferred because most residential construction uses 3/4" plywood or OSB subfloors that are ideal for nailing. The method also handles Ottawa's clay soil movement better, as minor subfloor flex won't compromise the installation like it might with rigid adhesive bonds.

**Subfloor preparation is critical** regardless of method - ensure your plywood is properly secured, level within 3/16" over 10 feet, and has proper moisture content (typically under 12%). Most installations also benefit from a vapor barrier in Ottawa's climate.

For a professional assessment of your specific subfloor conditions and hardwood installation, request a quote from Ottawa Floor Install to ensure optimal results for your Nepean home.

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Q22

## My kitchen has old linoleum and I want engineered hardwood - what should I expect to pay in Kanata?

**For engineered hardwood installation over old linoleum in Kanata, expect to pay \$10-15 per square foot installed**, including removal of the existing flooring and proper subfloor preparation.

The total cost breaks down into several components that are crucial for a successful installation. **Linoleum removal and disposal** typically adds \$1-2 per square foot to your project, as the old flooring needs to be completely removed and the adhesive residue cleaned off. Your subfloor will then need inspection and likely some preparation work - this could range from simple cleaning to leveling compound application, adding another \$1-3 per square foot depending on the subfloor condition.

**Engineered hardwood material and installation** in the Ottawa market currently runs \$8-14 per square foot for quality products. Mid-range engineered hardwood with a 4-6mm wear layer offers excellent durability for kitchens, while premium options with thicker wear layers or exotic species can push costs to \$15-18 per square foot. The installation method will depend on your subfloor - floating installations are most common over concrete, while nail-down or glue-down methods work well over wooden subfloors.

**Kitchen installations require special attention to moisture protection** since this is a high-humidity area. Your contractor should install proper moisture barriers and leave appropriate expansion gaps around appliances and cabinets. In Kanata's climate, allowing the engineered hardwood to acclimate in your home for 48-72 hours before installation is essential to prevent future movement issues.

For a typical 150 square foot kitchen, budget \$1,500-2,250 total, though final costs depend on your specific subfloor conditions and material choices. **Request quotes from licensed flooring contractors** who can assess your linoleum and subfloor condition to provide accurate pricing for your Kanata kitchen project.

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Q23

## Can hardwood flooring be installed over concrete in my Barrhaven basement?

**Yes, hardwood flooring can be installed over concrete in your Barrhaven basement, but it requires careful moisture management and proper installation methods.** The key is choosing the right type of hardwood and installation system for below-grade concrete applications.

**Engineered hardwood is your best option** for basement concrete installations. Unlike solid hardwood, engineered flooring has better dimensional stability and moisture resistance due to its multi-layer construction. The cross-grain layers help prevent expansion and contraction that can cause problems in basement environments. You'll want to use either a **floating installation with moisture barrier** or **glue-down method with moisture-resistant adhesive**.

**Moisture testing is absolutely critical** before any hardwood installation over concrete. Your contractor should perform calcium chloride tests to measure moisture vapor emission rates from the concrete. Ottawa's clay soil and seasonal moisture changes make basement humidity control especially important. The concrete must be properly cured (at least 60 days old) and sealed if necessary. A high-quality moisture barrier or vapor retarder is essential to prevent moisture from wicking up through the concrete.

**Subfloor preparation may be required** depending on your concrete's condition. Many Barrhaven basements benefit from a plywood or OSB subfloor system over the concrete, which provides better insulation, moisture protection, and a more comfortable walking surface. This also allows for easier repairs if moisture issues develop later. The concrete should be level within 3/16" over 10 feet, so grinding or self-leveling compound may be needed.

**Consider your basement's intended use and HVAC system.** Hardwood performs best with consistent temperature (60-80°F) and humidity (30-50% RH) year-round. Ensure your basement has proper heating, ventilation, and potentially dehumidification. For high-moisture areas or occasional flooding concerns, luxury vinyl plank (LVP) might be a more practical choice that still provides a wood-look appearance.

For a professional moisture assessment and installation quote specific to your Barrhaven basement conditions, request a consultation from Ottawa Floor Install's licensed contractors who understand local soil and moisture challenges.

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**Q24**

## **How long after hardwood installation before I can move furniture back in?**

**You can typically move furniture back onto newly installed hardwood floors within 24-48 hours**, but the exact timing depends on your installation method and environmental conditions.

For **nail-down and floating installations** (most common methods), the flooring is immediately walkable after installation. However, you should wait at least 24 hours before moving heavy furniture to allow the wood to settle and any adhesives used in the subfloor preparation to fully cure. **Glue-down installations** require 48-72 hours before heavy furniture placement, as the adhesive needs complete curing time.

**Temperature and humidity significantly impact settling time.** Ottawa's variable climate means winter installations (with dry indoor air) may require slightly longer settling periods than summer installations. Your contractor should provide specific guidance based on the wood species, installation method, and current conditions in your home.

When you do move furniture back, **use furniture pads or felt protectors** under all legs and bases to prevent scratching and denting. Heavy items like pianos, bookcases, or sectional sofas should be moved carefully - consider using furniture dollies or having movers handle the heavy pieces. Avoid dragging anything across the new floor surface.

**Pro tip for Ottawa homeowners:** If your installation coincides with heating season startup or shutdown, allow an extra day for the wood to acclimate to the changing indoor humidity levels before placing heavy furniture.

For professional hardwood installation with proper timing guidance, Ottawa Floor Install provides detailed post-installation care instructions with every project.

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Q25

## My wife wants tile, and I want hardwood for the kitchen. What is the compromise?

**Luxury vinyl plank (LVP) is your perfect compromise** - it gives you the warm wood look you want with the waterproof durability your wife needs in a kitchen.

Modern LVP technology has come incredibly far, offering **100% waterproof protection** that can handle spills, splashes, and humidity without the maintenance concerns of real hardwood. You'll get the authentic wood grain patterns and textures that satisfy your aesthetic preferences, while your wife gets peace of mind knowing the floor won't warp, cup, or stain from kitchen mishaps. Premium LVP options like rigid core (SPC) or WPC provide excellent durability and can even handle heavy appliances.

**In Ottawa's market, quality LVP installation runs \$5-12 per square foot**, making it cost-effective compared to premium hardwood (\$10-18/sq ft) while offering superior kitchen performance. Many homeowners choose wood-look LVP for kitchens and save real hardwood for living areas where moisture isn't a concern. The installation is also faster since there's no acclimation period required like with real hardwood.

**Another compromise option is engineered hardwood with proper sealing**, though it requires more maintenance and isn't truly waterproof. Some couples also do a **transition design** - tile in the high-splash zones near the sink and stove, with hardwood or LVP in the dining area of an open kitchen.

For your specific kitchen layout and to see samples that might satisfy both preferences, a consultation with experienced flooring contractors can help you explore options. Want to discuss your specific project? We offer free consultations to help couples navigate these decisions.

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Q26

## What causes cupping in hardwood floors, and how do Ottawa contractors prevent it?

**Hardwood floor cupping occurs when the edges of individual boards curl upward, creating a concave surface across the width of each plank.** This happens when the bottom of the boards absorbs more moisture than the top surface, causing uneven expansion.

**Moisture imbalance is the primary culprit behind cupping.** The most common causes include high humidity levels (above 60%), moisture from below the subfloor due to inadequate vapor barriers, plumbing leaks, or

seasonal humidity fluctuations. In Ottawa's climate, this is particularly problematic during humid summers when indoor humidity can spike, or in basements where concrete slabs may transfer moisture upward. Poor ventilation and inadequate HVAC systems that don't maintain consistent humidity levels throughout the home also contribute to the problem.

**Licensed Ottawa contractors prevent cupping through proper moisture management and installation techniques.** Before installation, they test both the subfloor and hardwood for moisture content using calibrated meters - the difference should be no more than 4% for solid hardwood and 2% for engineered. They install appropriate vapor barriers over concrete subfloors and ensure proper acclimation of the wood to your home's conditions for 3-7 days before installation.

**Proper environmental controls are equally important.** Ottawa contractors recommend maintaining indoor humidity between 30-50% year-round using humidifiers in winter and dehumidifiers in summer. They also ensure adequate spacing around the perimeter for natural expansion and contraction, and verify that HVAC systems provide consistent airflow throughout the space.

**Prevention is far more cost-effective than repair.** Once cupping occurs, it often requires professional sanding and refinishing (\$3-6 per square foot) or board replacement in severe cases. Ottawa's seasonal humidity swings make proper installation and ongoing humidity control essential for long-term floor performance.

For a free assessment of your hardwood flooring project and moisture management recommendations, request a quote from Ottawa Floor Install's licensed contractors.

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