

Hardwood Floors And Concrete Do Not Mix (Usually)

Installing hardwood floors directly to concrete without a sub-floor is a hit and miss situation. Moisture is an enemy of hardwood that is hard to overcome.

July 1, 2007 - [PRLog](#) -- Hardwood on Concrete

Installing hardwood floors on concrete can sometimes be a problem because of the moisture content of the concrete. Some installations use a plywood sub-floor while others glue the wood directly to the concrete. If the wood is glued to the concrete, the moisture content must be very low or it can cause the wood to expand and buckle. A plywood sub-floor can be used to prevent this problem during new construction, but adding sub-flooring to an existing room may raise the floor higher level than the adjoining rooms and may prevent doors from operating properly.

Moisture Testing Floors

If you want to glue the wood to the floor, you must do moisture testing. Unfortunately many stores that handle a variety of floor coverings do not have properly trained people or equipment to test for moisture. Moisture awareness and control is critical for successful hardwood flooring installations. What may look like a flawless floor after the installer has left may turn into your worst nightmare months later when moisture begins make the floor expand or contract. If a hardwood installer does not check the moisture content with a meter similar to the one in the photo on the right, stop him! Find a company that has people trained to do a moisture test, find out from the flooring manufacturer what the maximum concrete moisture can be for their wood, then have the floor tested and get the results so you can decide whether to go ahead with the installation. Engineered hardwood can usually withstand more moisture than solid wood. The glue used can also make a difference. Some glues are better moisture barriers than others.

Hardwood acclimation

Hardwood acclimation is also necessary before installation. The wood that will be used in the installation should be stored on site for a few days before installation. This lets wood that has been stored in a hot dry warehouse to adjust to the temperature and humidity of the room where it is to be installed. Some hardwood manufactures also have a recommended humidity level that the room should be kept in order to prevent changes in the wood after installation. Some hardwood manufacturers suggest keeping the relative humidity of the home in the range of 50% after the installation to maintain the floor's original appearance. Not doing so will cause shrinking or swelling. Check with the manufacturer for all the their recommendations in your planning phase.

Hardwood and Concrete do not mix (usually)

I have personal experience with good and bad installations of hardwood on concrete in my home. My home was eight years old when I bought it and had 5/16 solid hardwood installed on a slab floor. I had no idea that moisture could cause a problem but my installer insisted that moisture test be done before he would install the wood. He tested the the slab and found the moisture content very acceptable. He insisted on using a special glue that was much more expensive than the supply chain variety and after all was said and done I was very happy with my floor. I have had no problems with it since install four years ago.

Needless to say, when I added a new room to my home, I wanted to the same wood in that new room. My contractor was using one of the best know companies in town to do the work, but that did not mean they knew what they were doing. They were clueless about installations of hardwood on concrete. My slab was already finished so I could not install a sub-floor and keep the room level with the adjoining rooms. I saw trouble signs but thought I could make it work if I guided them every step and made sure they were doing

the proper testing and using the right adhesive.

They put an order in for the wood and made plans to do the testing and I charged on to do other things.

Two weeks later I come home to find a flooring installer in my new room with and a floor 95% installed. Needless to say I was upset. The wood started to swell in only few days and I had to have the floor torn out and installed again. The second installation was made after doing everything right and the floor is still has some problems.

The lesson here is do not let your emotions control your thought process. I wanted that floor really badly. I wanted it to match perfectly with the old floor and my emotions prevented me from making good decisions.

So here is my advise to anyone contemplating installation of solid hardwood on concrete. DON'T!! Use some of the other great flooring materials or install a wood sub-floor with a moisture barrier. Some of the new laminate floors are hardly distinguishable from hardwood and are a much better choice than hardwood when covering concrete.

Find more information about hardwood floors as well as carpet, vinyl flooring and ceramic tile at the The Flooring Info Page <http://clcweb.com/floors>.

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