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RETAIL SALES GUIDE:

Helping Customers Choose the Right Wood Flooring



Why the Right Product Matters

Selecting the right wood flooring isn't just about color or price, it's about aligning the product with how the customer actually lives in their home.

When the flooring choice matches the environment, installation conditions, and long-term expectations, it performs the way it's designed to and looks beautiful for years to come.

Taking the time upfront to guide customers into the appropriate construction and species helps avoid preventable issues like excessive movement, surface wear, and moisture-related concerns.

This approach protects the customer's investment, reduces the likelihood of costly returns or claims, and ensures satisfaction long after the sale is complete.

Start Here: Qualify the Customer

Your job is to simplify the decision. Ask these questions before you start pulling boards.

Step 1: Ask 5 Questions

- Where is the floor going? (main level, upstairs, basement, concrete slab)
- Kids or pets? (scratch / dent risk, cleanup reality)
- Budget range? (target \$/sq. ft. and total project range)
- Style goal? (light/dark; modern/rustic; clean/character)
- Install? (DIY vs pro; timeline; occupied vs empty home)

Quick Routing Matrix

If the customer says...	Steer them to...	Why it works
Basement / slab / humidity swings	Engineered	More stable construction; ideal over concrete & variable moisture
Main floor / long-term home	Solid Wood Flooring	Can be refinished as needed and delivers the longest service life
Pets / Kids / High Traffic	Harder species + lower sheen	Better dent resistance; hides day-to-day wear
Tight budget	Engineered / More Character	Great Look / Lower Cost
Wants long-term refresh option	Solid or 3mm+ Thick Veneer	Allows for future sand and refinish

Core Selling Points (when they're comparing to vinyl/laminate)

Hardwood can be renewed (refinished), adds warmth and character, is easy to clean, and is a long-term value play. Use this simple line: "Other floors get replaced. Hardwood gets restored."



Solid vs Engineered: Make the First Big Decision

Start with location and moisture exposure. This is where you prevent problems and returns.

Solid Hardwood	Engineered Hardwood
Best for: Main floors, controlled humidity, long-term	Best for: Basements, slabs, condos, kitchens and glued installations
Timeless Aesthetic + Adds value to your home	Wider Range of Options
PRO Install	DIY Friendly

THINK: “If it’s below grade or over concrete → engineered.
If it’s on grade or above and they want long term durability → solid.”

Make It Home-Proof: Species, Durability & Grade

Customers worry about dents, scratches, and regret. Your job is to match performance to lifestyle and set expectations.

Species Guide (Simple and Useful)

Species	What it looks like	Performance angle	Best for
Oak	Classic grain; versatile tones	Durable, dependable choice	Most homes & styles
Maple	Clean, subtle grain; bright feel	Very hard; good wear resistance	Modern looks; busy spaces
Hickory	Bold variation; rustic character	Hardest common domestic option	Kids/pets; rustic/modern farmhouse
Cherry / Walnut	Rich, darker tones	Softer than the above; luxury look	Bedrooms, home offices, lower traffic

How to Use the Janka Conversation (Keep it Simple)

- Higher Janka number = better dent resistance.
- In high-traffic zones (entries, halls, family rooms), steer to harder species (Oak/Maple/Hickory).
- Then layer in finish/texture: matte + texture hides everyday wear better than high gloss.

Grades: Translate it into “Character”

- Clear/Select: clean, uniform, premium modern look.
- Common: natural variation; best balance of beauty and value.
- Rustic: knots/character; perfect for farmhouse, lodge, and “real wood” buyers.

SALES TIP: If they’re unsure about grade, show two boards side-by-side and ask: “Do you want calm and clean... or natural and full of character?”



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Color & Design: Help Them Commit Without Fear

Most customers stall here. Use these questions and guidelines to shorten the decision.

Ask this First

“Do you want the floor to be the star of the room... or the backdrop?”

Light Hardwood	Dark Hardwood
Natural, airy feel. Hides dust and many scratches.	Bolder contrast. Stands out in a room.

Color Decision Guidance

- Low natural light: steer light (whites, blondes, beiges, light grays) to open the room.
- Lots of natural light: wider palette but remind about UV color change over time.
- Active lifestyle (kids/pets): light + matte tends to look “clean” more often.
- Small rooms: light colors and fewer visual breaks feel larger.

Plank Width Guidance

- Narrow (2-1/4" - 3"): clean lines, traditional feel, less movement.
- Wide (5" - 7"+): modern/rustic look, fewer seams, shows more grain and character.

Close the Sale: Bundle, Quote, and Confirm

This is where you reduce doubt and increase ticket. Use a simple close framework and handle objections directly.

Objection Handling

- “Will it scratch?” → Remember: Any floor can scratch. Recommend harder species + texture + matte. Add felt pads and entry mats.
- “Is it hard to maintain?” → Sweep/vacuum, clean with hardwood floor cleaner only, clean spills fast. No steam or wet mops.
- “Is it worth it?” → Reinforce long-term value: real wood look, durability, and added home value.

The Close Framework (Say it Out Loud)

- 1) Confirm platform fit → solid vs engineered.
- 2) Match lifestyle → species + finish/texture.
- 3) Lock the look → color + width + grade/character.
- 4) Build the system → add underlayment, trim/molding, transitions, and cleaner.
- 5) Quote confidently → “Want me to price this exact setup for your square footage?”

Attach Rate Line: “To protect the investment, let’s add the right underlayment and a cleaner made for hardwood finishes.”

One-Sentence Wrap: “We’re picking a floor that fits your space, your lifestyle, and how you want the room to feel.”



LIGHT HARDWOOD FLOORING

Natural Look. Hides dirt, scratches and light-colored pet hair.



DARK HARDWOOD FLOORING

Adds depth, contrast and drama. Shows dirt and scratches more, but hides dark-colored pet hair.

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Common Wood Flooring Claims — and How to Prevent Them at the Point of Sale

1. Moisture-Related Issues (Cupping, Crowning, Gapping)

What causes the claim:

Improper acclimation, high or fluctuating humidity, moisture coming from the subfloor, or installing the wrong product in moisture-prone areas.

How to prevent it:

- Ask where the floor is being installed (on-grade, below-grade, slab vs. wood subfloor)
- Explain why engineered wood is often the better choice in basements, kitchens, or variable environments
- Reinforce the importance of proper acclimation and moisture testing prior to installation
- Set expectations that wood is a natural material that responds to its environment

2. Excessive Movement (Seasonal Gaps or Expansion)

What causes the claim:

Natural expansion and contraction being mistaken for a defect, often due to unrealistic expectations or poor environmental control.

How to prevent it:

- Educate the customer that all real wood moves seasonally
- Recommend engineered constructions or narrower plank widths when stability is a concern
- Discuss proper indoor humidity ranges and the role of HVAC and humidification
- Frame movement as normal behavior, not a product failure

3. Surface Wear, Scratching, or Denting

What causes the claim:

Pets, heavy furniture, high foot traffic, or soft species being installed in demanding environments.

How to prevent it:

- Ask lifestyle questions: pets, kids, furniture type, traffic patterns
- Explain species hardness and finish performance in plain language
- Recommended furniture protectors/gliders to protect flooring
- Recommend harder species, stronger finishes, or engineered products with performance coatings when needed
- Set realistic expectations: no wood floor is scratch-proof

4. Color Variation & Natural Character Concerns

What causes the claim:

Customers expecting uniformity in a natural product, or not understanding knots, mineral streaks, and color variation.

How to prevent it:

- Show large samples or multiple boards, not just a small swatch
- Clearly explain that variation is a feature of real wood, not a flaw

- Steer customers toward more uniform species or stains if consistency is important
- Confirm acceptance of natural character before purchase

5. Twisting and Bowing

What causes the claim:

Solid hardwood flooring is made from real wood, so some twisting or bowing of boards can occur. This is a normal part of working with a natural material and does not mean the product is defective. Because boards may not always lay perfectly flat, it's important to purchase extra material (overage) to allow for proper selection and installation—especially for glue-down applications.

How to prevent it:

Always order appropriate overage. Industry standards are as follows:

- Standard installation: Minimum 5%
- Diagonal installation: Minimum 10%
- Solid Wood Glue-down installation: Minimum 15%

6. Installation-Related Failures

What causes the claim:

Improper installation methods, incorrect adhesives, lack of expansion space, or ignoring manufacturer guidelines.

How to prevent it:

- Reinforce that manufacturer installation instructions must be followed and can be found on Robbins.com
- Encourage use of qualified installers familiar with wood flooring
- Make sure the customer understands what would be covered under warranty that can be found on Robbins.com
- Position proper installation as part of protecting their investment.

7. Wrong Product for the Space

What causes the claim:

Solid wood installed where engineered was needed, wide planks in unstable environments, or wood used where water exposure is likely.

How to prevent it:

- Walk through the room conditions before recommending a product.
- Match construction type to environment, not just appearance.
- Explain why “the right product for the right space” matters long term.
- Frame this as guidance, not upselling.

Getting the customer into the right flooring upfront protects everyone involved—the homeowner, the installer, the retailer, and the manufacturer. Most claims aren't product failures; they're expectations or application mismatches. A short conversation at the start of the sale prevents costly issues later and leads to happier customers long after installation.



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