

Restoration vs Replacement Guide

Make the Right Decision for Your Flooring Project

Choosing between restoring existing floors or installing new ones impacts both budget and results. This guide helps you evaluate your options.

Evaluating Floor Condition

Good Restoration Candidates

- Surface scratches and dull finish
- Minor gaps (under 2mm)
- Solid structure, minimal squeaks
- 3mm+ wear layer remaining
- Less than 25% boards damaged

Poor Restoration Candidates

- Structural damage or rot
- Extensive water damage
- Wear layer under 2mm
- Multiple previous sandings
- Over 30% boards need replacement

Quick Tests

Wear Layer: Insert card in gap - seeing tongue top means insufficient material **Stability:** Walk floor marking issues - over 20% problems indicates structural issues **Moisture:** Readings over 14% suggest ongoing problems

The Restoration Process

Stage 1: Preparation

- Remove furniture, repair damaged boards, secure squeaks, fill gaps

Stage 2: Sanding

- Coarse grit removes finish

- Medium grit smooths surface
- Fine grit prepares for finishing
- Edges and corners hand-finished

Stage 3: Finishing

- Clean thoroughly
- Apply stain if desired
- 2-3 coats of finish with light sanding between

Timeline: 3-5 days average room **Disruption:** High - complete room evacuation

Cost Comparison

Restoration: Generally 40-60% less than replacement

- Includes repairs, sanding, gap filling, refinishing
- May uncover hidden damage
- Limited design change options

Replacement: Typically 60-150% more than restoration

- Includes removal, disposal, new materials, installation
- Opportunity for subfloor improvements
- Complete design flexibility

Expected Results

Restoration

Achievable: 80-95% of new appearance, enhanced grain, preserved character **Limitations:** Deep stains may remain, some gaps persist, wear patterns visible

Replacement

Advantages: 100% uniform appearance, warranty coverage, modern finishes **Considerations:** Loss of character, higher environmental impact

Decision Guide

Choose Restoration When:

- Solid hardwood 18mm+
- Under 25% damage
- Preserving character important
- Budget conscious
- 3mm+ wear layer
- Quick turnaround needed

Choose Replacement When:

- Structural problems exist
- Over 40% damage
- Want different species/width
- Sanded 3+ times previously
- Major subfloor work needed

Consider Hybrid Approach:

- Room-by-room restoration
- Replace high-traffic areas only
- Mix restoration and replacement by zone

Special Considerations

Listed Buildings: May require restoration - check regulations **Engineered Floors:** Limited to 1-3 sandings based on veneer **Parquet:** Specialist restoration often worthwhile **Underfloor Heating:** Restoration maintains compatibility

The Bottom Line

Restoration suits solid floors with localised wear, preserving character while saving money. Replacement makes sense for severe damage or design changes. Quality hardwood can be restored 3-5 times over its lifetime. Get multiple professional assessments—good contractors will advise honestly on the best option for your floors.