

Decking Installation Checklist / Guidelines only

To construct a successful residential timber deck and to gain optimal performance to maximise it's life span, it's strongly recommend you adhere to the following three key areas;

1. Ensure the subfloor framing is appropriately designed using hardwood or cypress bearers and joists. The Design method is outlayed in the Australian Standard 1684: Residential Timber-Framed Construction and AS1720: Timber structures – Design Methods.
2. Adequate spacing between boards provides for possible expansion and also caters for ventilation:
 - **Decking boards up to 90mm wide must have a minimum of 5mm gap between board edges.**
 - **Decking boards wider than 90mm must have a minimum of 8mm gap between board edges.**
3. Use durable decking screws (meeting Corrosion Resistant Class 3) or stainless steel screws grade 304 for general use or grade 316 for applications that are subject to salt water or chlorine. For decking boards 19 or 20mm thick, a screw length of 50mm is sufficient into hardwood or cypress joists. If thicker boards are used then 65mm plus length screw may be used.

Other important points to adhere to:

- Use high durability timbers - above-ground durability class 2 hardwood or cypress.
- Protective coating prior to construction on all sides and ends with an Oil based exterior decking product.
- Protect upper surface of joist by brushing on a water repellent preservative, oil based primer followed by paint or stain, or alternatively protective capping.
- Provide sufficient ventilation and drainage beneath the timber deck, especially for installations close to the ground. Water must be able to drain away quickly from the ground surface to prevent the possibility of soil moisture affecting the deck.
- Boards are to span at least two joists. For joists at 450mm centers the minimum board length is 900mm.
- Boards need to be cut to ensure butt joining over joists.
- Prior to planning we recommend you contact your local council to find out if your deck requires planning approval and to follow the necessary steps to comply.

Decks adjacent to swimming pools or near the sea

With decks installed adjacent to swimming pools or where sea air contains salt, special care is needed with the fixings to prevent corrosion. Within one meter of swimming pools, stainless steel fixings are recommended. It should also be noted that some local authorities require stainless steel fixings within a certain distance of the coast.

Decks in bushfire prone areas

It is the local authority that declares an area to be a bushfire prone area. In designated bushfire prone areas timber decks must meet the requirements of Australian Standard 'AS 3959 – Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas'. As the threat increases so do the restrictions on what building materials can be used. Species that can be used are limited to a number of hardwoods and other requirements include keeping the space beneath the deck open, specific requirements relating to posts, the gap width

between boards, and keeping the deck separated from the dwelling may need to be taken into account.

Finishing after installation

It is extremely important that your deck is given a thorough clean that ensures all iron, steel and metal pieces, filings and micro particles are completely removed.

Metals can react with the tannins in the timber and moisture, which will leave unsightly black stains on the decking that are difficult to remove.

If staining occurs, use a timber deck cleaning solution or Oxalic Acid (mixed at the appropriate proportion's for use with timber) and scrub to remove the stain. Once cleaning is completed, rinse the deck thoroughly with fresh water.

Heavy staining and stains that have been left for some time, may require the deck to be sanded to remove.

Finish manufacturers generally indicate to leave the deck for 4 to 6 weeks prior to applying the finish. Depending on the finish and condition of the deck at that time, it may be necessary to use a proprietary deck-cleaning product first.

Prior to applying the finish, a water repellent preservative can be considered as a base coat.

This is also necessary for all cypress decking. The most appropriate decking coating has various waxes and resins dissolved in a light organic solvent that inhibit decay. Compatibility of the finish and the period to be left before finishing needs to be checked with the finish manufacturer.

Safety checks

Checks should be made at least annually as to the condition of the deck, deck structure and fixings.

There can also be movement of board fixings and boards within the deck at any time and more often with a change in season. Therefore regular routine checks of the decking are also recommended. Any protruding screws should be attended to when observed, as should any damaged boards. In addition to this, the structure particularly with elevated decks should be checked for soundness and that fixings are not corroding. Ventilation beneath the deck also needs to be checked and reinstated when necessary.



For further installation details refer to the relevant Australian Standards.
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