DIMENSIONS™

Plywood Buying Guide

By Thickness:

3-ply - A good choice for indoor décor projects because it can be used in more detailed, delicate, decorative applications, yet it's strong and durable enough to build projects that last.

5-ply - For indoor projects that require more strength and durability than 3-ply can offer, but less than what's needed for outdoor applications, yet still offers greater aesthetics than multi-ply.

Multi-ply - Comprised of usually seven or more layers, this type of plywood can be used to create incredibly strong, heavy-duty projects, typically for exterior use such as construction, roofing, etc., as it is able to withstand wind and resist damage.

By Type:

Softwood (pine, spruce, fir, poplar) - For exterior frame and roof sheathing, temporary flooring and sub-flooring, sheds, doghouses, storage/shelving, etc.

Hardwood (birch, maple, oak, and walnut) – For interior applications such as furniture, attractive storage and organizational solutions, sporting equipment/accessories, musical instruments, intricate projects, strong frames and more.

Aircraft (specific hardwoods, like mahogany or birch) - For projects that need industrial-strength woods, like airplanes, boats, and furniture that's meant to hold a lot of weight, this is the highest-grade, most durable, incredibly strong, heat- and moisture- resistant plywood.

Exterior – Multi-ply wood manufactured with weather- and water-resistant glue that combats the elements and provides strong, sturdy, long-lasting results.

Lumber Core – Comprised of a thick core surrounded by 2 thin veneers, this 3-ply plywood typically features outer plies made of hardwood and inner plies glued into one solid layer with exceptional screw-holding capabilities for projects that need extra-strong holding power.

Marine – This is the highest-grade, knot-free, water-resistant, exterior plywood available for projects such as outdoor furniture decorative gazebos, planter boxes, benches, etc.

Overlaid – This plywood's overlaid face gives it a finished, decorative appearance with a smooth, durable, scratch- and abrasion-resistant, coated surface. This keeps water and other particles from sticking and damaging, resulting in a finished project that's stronger and more durable than one made from traditional plywood.

Structural (a.k.a. sheathing) – This inexpensive, C- or D-grade plywood is less aesthetically appealing but manufactured with very strong adhesives that offer the strength necessary for framing and building applications in areas that will ultimately be covered by weather-resistant material. Use inside or out, but not recommended for exposed outdoor conditions.

Plywood Alternatives:
Composite Woods - Uses regular wood layers on the inside and layers that consist of fiberboard covered with a layer of hardwood externally, smooth outside, easy to work with, strong core, durable and unyielding frame for furniture and cabinetry, interior

MDF - Less expensive, stronger than particleboard, no knots or rings, no wood grain, won't handle a lot of stress, easy to cut and paint, no splinters when sawn, dense construction, smooth finish, interior

Hardboard - Exceptionally durable, despite its thin frame, one side rough and the other finished, doesn't bend or warp, strong, can stand up to constant wear and tear for kitchen countertops, furniture frames, subflooring, base of their laminate flooring, interior

Particleboard – Least expensive, no layered construction, much less durable, split and crack easily, heavy, untreated, susceptible to swelling if it's in an area with high moisture, should be sealed to avoid warping and swelling, for inexpensive furniture pieces, interior

By Grade:

A-B:

- For anything that may be exposed to weather or needs excellent strength
- For projects that require a high-end finish, opt for higher grades. These should have little to no knots and voids and should provide a nice, smooth finish for staining or painting

C-D: For a covered, internal structural

CDX: Lowest class, often used in construction for foundations and roofing or as a base for other materials, cannot stand prolonged exposure to water, must be covered by another material, can be sanded easily, which will prepare it for a coat of primer and paint

X means that it met the standards for external use