



Common Case Goods Terminology

While shopping for furniture, you may be unsure about some of the terms that may be used by sales people or printed on hang tags and labels. Here are a few terms along with descriptions of materials used in the construction of case goods.

Case Goods Case goods is a term used to describe various types of cabinetry and non-upholstered furniture pieces which have certain function or storage capabilities. Examples include chests, desks, bedsteads, tables and chairs.

Solid Hardwood Solid hardwood means that each exposed furniture part is made of hardwood lumber. In this construction method, strips or boards are bonded with stronger-than-wood glue and other wood joinery techniques. These joinery techniques include edge-to-edge, face-to-face, end-to-end or a combination of all three. In all instances, continuous glue lines indicate solid construction.

Stains and other effects dramatize or disguise the natural wood color and grain. A careful buyer remembers that terms like “oak finish” or “cherry finish” may only mean that other materials have simply been given the appearance of the named wood.

Hardwood Veneer Hardwood veneers are thin slices of wood which usually are bonded to a reconstructed wood product such as particle-board or medium density fiber-board. Hardwood veneers also can be bonded to solid wood or plywood. This type of construction sometimes is described as “all wood.”

Artificial Laminate Artificial laminate surfaces are simulations of natural hardwoods. In laminated furniture, imitation wood grain is reproduced on a thin layer of plastic, foil or paper. That layer is then bonded to particle-board or other substrate.

Plywood Plywood is made by gluing several layers of wood veneer together with their grains at right angles, it is often stronger than solid wood.

More than 90 percent of furniture today contains some plywood. Large, flat surfaces, such as table and counter tops and curved wood pieces often are made of plywood because it can be bent and molded. It is very strong as a result of its construction and resists checking, splitting and warping.

Hardboard

Hardboard is made from refined wood fibers locked together with adhesives, steam and pressure. There are three types of hardboard: Standard, tempered and service.

Standard is strong and has good water resistance. It is often used in furniture construction. Tempered hardboard has been treated chemically and with heat to increase its stiffness, hardness and finishing properties. It is often used in floors and for dividers within drawers or cabinets. It is also sometimes used as back panels for cabinets, bookcases and mirrors.

Hardboard may either be smooth on both sides or smooth on one side and rough on the other. Hardboard comes in 1/16 inch to 3/4 inch thicknesses and in panels of various sizes.

Particle board is composed of wood particles and adhesive. It can be formed by extrusion, mat-forming or flat pressing.

Densities of particle boards vary from 30 to 50 pounds per cubic foot. Thicknesses vary from 1/8 inch to two inches. It is available in several panel sizes. Particle board has no grain, so it is virtually free from splitting, checking, shrinking and warping problems. Particle board is used in place of plywood to construct large, flat surfaces. It is then finished with veneers or laminates. Particle board can be finished with conventional furniture finishes.

Joinery

Joinery is a term used to describe the machining done to a piece of wood, which in turn are used to fasten pieces of wood together, which will eventually form a case goods product. Joints can be machined on ends, faces and sides or combinations of pieces of wood.

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