

Buying Cabinet Furniture

Wall and Floor Cupboards

Bookcases and Bureaux

Dining and Occasional Furniture

Computer, Hi Fi and Video Units



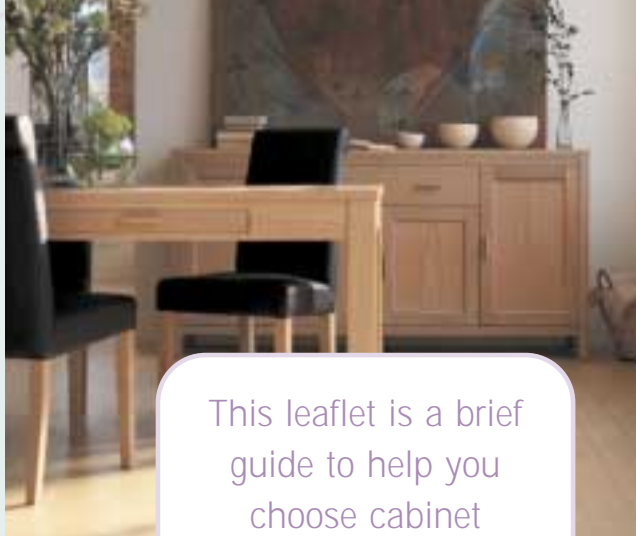
The sign of **good quality and service** in the furniture industry

Making your choice...

“Qualitas - promoting quality and customer care in the furniture industry”

Buying from a Qualitas member gives consumers important safeguards including a commitment to producing a quality product, advice and help if needed in selecting an item and, if necessary, help in resolving any concerns customers may have.

Buy with confidence from a Qualitas member



This leaflet is a brief guide to help you choose cabinet furniture - which matches your needs.

When buying a dining table, bookcase, cupboard or any item of cabinet furniture - the selection of products on offer appears endless. There are many different styles, designs and price ranges. The temptation is to make the selection based on what looks good, fits in with the home furnishing scheme in terms of style, finish, colour, and meets the budget.

Although there are differences in the materials and finishes, the most important things to consider when choosing cabinet furniture are the purposes for which you need the item, taking into account size, strength, durability and after care requirements.

If the item is for storage - whether for drinks, ornaments, books, or even filling - check the space you need. Carefully measure the space where you intend to position the item. Remember that units usually require extra space to allow doors and drawers to open. It is also worth considering the weight of the intended contents to be stored/displayed to ensure stability.

Once you have established your needs, this leaflet explains the different materials and constructions so that you can select the most suitable pieces for your home.



What's under the surface?

Cabinet furniture can be made from a variety of materials - solid woods, natural or synthetic veneers, and man-made boards or a mixture of each. All have their advantages and understanding a little about the materials can help you choose the product most suited to you.

Solid wood

The colour, feel and overall appearance of a solid wood product can be hard to beat and gives the most 'traditional' feel to cabinet furniture. As a wholly natural product, solid wood will show knots, grain/colour variation and other features.

Solid wood products will have a tendency, even if kiln dried, to move with temperature and humidity changes. The colour of solid wood can also change over a period of time as the wood mellows and matures. The unique nature of wood can also mean that panels and adjoining pieces of furniture will not always be an exact match in terms of colour and grain.

Real wood veneers

Veneers consist of thin layers of wood with a fine or decorative finish that are applied to various types of material. This could be timber or some form of man made board. The advantages of veneers are that the furniture itself can be more stable and less prone to movement or warping, and a wider range of decorative finishes can be achieved than solid woods. Grain and colour match can be better than solid wood pieces, but because the veneers are wood they can be subject to movement with changes in temperature and humidity.

In some cases, wood veneers can give the look of real wood at a cheaper price. However, this is not always the case - finely decorated or finished veneered items can be expensive.

Many timbers, solid or veneered, naturally vary in grain and colour from piece to piece. This gives the furniture a uniqueness that sets it aside from synthetic veneers and painted surfaces. Depending on the intensity of daylight an item is subjected to, over a period of time the colour of the timber may mellow i.e. become darker. This often happens in what appears to be an erratic manner, as some pieces will appear lighter than others. The effect is natural.

However, problems can occur if an item such as a lamp, vase or mat is left in one place. This will slow the colour change of the timber under the item and may result in an area of lighter wood that may take longer to mellow. The mellowing of timber occurs rapidly for about the first two years, it then appears to slow down and eventually the furniture will reach full 'maturity'. However, some woods do lighten with exposure to sunlight so regularly repositioning the furniture and items on it should be undertaken as a precaution.



Synthetic veneers

Synthetic veneers are also used extensively on cabinet furniture. These are paper or PVC foils that have been printed, and usually embossed, to represent the feel and appearance of real wood. They too are usually bonded to chipboard or MDF. The difference to the customer is that these have a uniform colour and grain structure. This means that they will not vary between pieces of furniture and will not be subject to changes in colour fading due to light.

Man made boards

Man-made boards such as plywood and chipboard have the advantage of being more stable than solid wood. They are less likely to warp, split, shrink or expand when temperatures and humidity vary.

A more recent product is medium density fibreboard (MDF) - a smooth board which can be cut and shaped without leaving a rough edge. It is an ideal base for lacquer and foil finishes and because of its consistent colour and visible edges can be stained or lacquered to resemble wood.

Any wood or veneer will vary in colour and graining from piece to piece, giving it that unique individuality which distinguishes it from synthetic materials such as plastic or metal. Matching of veneers cannot always be guaranteed and you should check with your retailer before ordering.



Beauty in the eye of the beholder

Finishes used on solid and veneered wood vary from simple waxes and oiled finishes to lacquers capable of withstanding different levels of use. It is worth asking your retailer how you should care for the product you are buying as the maintenance necessary for each type of finish varies.

Most modern furniture is finished with a lacquer that has been developed to maintain appearance in normal use and should only need regular, light dusting with a soft cloth. If sticky marks occur on the surface they can be removed with a dilute solution of warm soapy water. The offending area should be rubbed lightly and then completely dried immediately afterwards before replacing any vases etc. Wax polishes should only be used when damage has occurred, that is the lacquer has been cracked or removed. It should be noted that the wax polish will not have the same level of resistance to damage as the original finish.

■ **Manufacturers' care instructions should always be followed. Cleaning products that are not recommended by the furniture manufacturer should never be used.**

Looking after your purchase

Modern finishes are generally hard wearing and require little maintenance. However, care during use will help to prevent damage and will prolong the life of your furniture.

- Care needs to be taken to protect the furniture from accidents during use:
- When moving the furniture protect the surface from knocks and scratches. Corners and edges are particularly prone to accidental damage and need covering during moving.
- When the furniture is being moved, ensure this is carried out carefully and the cabinets are not dragged across the floor. Once the item is in its new position make sure it stands level to ensure smooth opening of the doors and running of the drawers. Never use force on the doors, drawers or carcass.
- When selecting a position for furniture, ensure that it is in a place where it will not be exposed to excessive sunlight. Neither should it be in a position where there is direct heat, such as next to a radiator, as this may cause damage to both the surface and the wooden structure.
- When using the surface for serving food and drinks, or any item that may be wet, always use protective mats and coasters. If any hot serving dishes are used, special protection will be needed. Casserole stand type mats are best as they lift the hot item away from the surface. However, care should be taken to ensure that the dish does not overhang the stand as this may allow hot liquids or condensation to drop on to the surface.
- If any spillages do occur, whether hot or cold, make sure they are wiped up immediately.
- Obtain and follow the manufacturer's care instructions.

Getting it together

Quality self-assembly furniture can look just like factory

assembled units but with advantage of allowing large items to be assembled where they are to be positioned, thus avoiding access problems (e.g. struggling with a large wardrobe up the stairs!).

It can be very tempting to unpack and immediately start assembling your purchase but even some simple products need to be assembled in a particular order that may not appear obvious so, as a general rule, **always read the instructions before beginning.**

Once properly assembled, these types of unit are usually very secure and depending on the fittings, may be dismantled and reassembled if the furniture needs to be moved.

Some larger pieces of furniture may be secured against a wall by a simple angle bracket; which should help to keep the structure rigid and strong - a useful safety precaution for large items such as tall bookcases and wardrobes.



Delivery

When buying cabinet furniture it is a good idea to take a tape measure along to check that you can get the furniture you intend buying into the desired room and that it will fit its intended location.

When your furniture arrives at your home, check carefully that it is 'as ordered' and fault-free. Damage and defects should be reported as soon as possible so that the matter can be resolved swiftly and satisfactorily.



If in doubt, consult your Qualitas retailer.

Qualitas Charter

Manufacturers and retailers who are members of Qualitas will:

- ✓ Provide well-made and dependable products.
- ✓ Provide clear and accurate information about the product and its price.
- ✓ Provide clear and accurate information on suitability for use and product care.
- ✓ Provide accurate delivery information and give prompt advice to the consumer if there is any delay to a quoted delivery date.
- ✓ Where guarantees are given they must be clear and easily understood and comply with all current consumer legislation.
- ✓ Ensure that all service requests are handled with courtesy, efficiency and speed.
- ✓ In the event of an unresolved dispute to accept the ruling of the Qualitas conciliation service.



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