

## Hardwood Shopper

*A guide to wood, its uses, grades, and board feet. Buying wood can be just as much fun as working it, if you're informed. The basics here will get you started.*



**Understanding hardwood grades**

No two hardwood boards look alike. That's why each hardwood board is assigned a grade at the mill by a lumber grader. Each grade, **below**, is based on a percentage of yield in clear face cuttings as seen from the clearest side of the board.

## GRADING TERMS

GRADE	CHARACTERISTICS
<b>FAS (First and seconds)</b>	The best grade. Boards 6" and wider, 8' and longer. Almost clear. Yields 83-2/3 percent clear face cuttings 4" or wider by 5' or longer and 3" or wider by 7' or longer.
<b>Selects</b>	Boards 4" and wider, 6' and longer. One side is FAS, the other is No. 1 Common. Yields 83-2/3 percent clear face cuttings.
<b>No. 1 Common</b>	Boards are 3" and wider, 4' and longer. Yields 66-2/3 percent clear face cuttings 4" or wider by 2' or longer and 3" or wider by 3' or longer.

## Easy board foot calculation

Hardwoods sell in grades by the board foot, a basic unit of measurement that equals a 1"-thick board that's 12" wide and 12" long. That's because hardwoods—unlike softwoods—aren't cut and milled as dressed, sized lumber in standard nominal dimensions (2X4, 1X6, 4X4, etc.) to only be cut to length for construction. Instead, mills saw hardwoods into random widths and lengths to best take advantage of the clear wood in a log. Hardwoods do come in nominal thicknesses, such as 1", 1 1/4", etc. (often referred to as four-quarter, five-quarter, and so on), that actually are a bit shy of the stated thickness. Therefore, you'll pay for a 1"-thick measurement but actually be getting about 3/16" less. Board widths aren't standardized. Typically, the dealer will "round up" to the next inch of width and charge you for it. To help you in estimating stock and cost for the projects you want to build, the chart **below** gives you the amount of board feet in a range of common hardwood dimensions you'll likely come across where you shop for wood.

## BOARD FOOT CALCULATOR

**1"-THICK LUMBER****LENGTH****6'****8'****10'****12'****14'****16'****3"**

1.5

2

2.5

3

3.5

4

**4"**

2

2.66

3.33

4

4.66

5.33

**6"**

3

4

5

6

7

8

**8"**

4

5.33

6.66

8

9.33

10.66

**10"**

5

6.66

8.33

10

11.66

13.33

**12"**

6

8

10

12

14

16

**W  
I  
D  
T  
H**

**1-1/4"-THICK LUMBER****LENGTH****6'****8'****10'****12'****14'****16'****4"**

2.5

3.33

4.16

5

5.83

6.66

**W  
I  
D  
T  
H****6"**

3.75

5

6.25

7.5

8.75

10

**8"**

5

6.66

8.33

10

11.66

13.33

**10"**

6.25

8.33

10.41

12.5

14.58

16.66

**12"**

7.5

10

12.5

15

17.5

20

## 2"-THICK LUMBER

### LENGTH

6'      8'      10'      12'      14'      16'

W  
I  
D  
T  
H

6"

6

8

10

12

14

16

8"

8

10.66

13.33

16

18.66

21.33

10"

10

13.33

16.66

20

23.33

26.66

12"

12

16

20

24

28

32



By WOOD Magazine Staff