

MOISTURE CONTENT AND MACHINING TOLERANCES

Preparation
Guide

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GOOD JOINERY PRACTICE

The moisture content of timber changes constantly with variations in ambient temperature and relative humidity.

As moisture content changes, the cells in the timber (standard species) swell or shrink to accommodate the changing moisture levels, producing a dimensional change in the timber section.



The degree of dimensional change varies with species and grade, but as a broad rule of thumb, standard species dimensions will vary by about 1% for every 3% change in timber moisture content.

Over a year, the equilibrium moisture content of exterior joinery can vary from <12% in dry summer conditions to >18% in the wetter winter months.

Since moisture contents as low as 10% are often found in workshops without humidity control, dimensional changes as large as 3% - 4% are quite possible when the joinery is delivered and fitted on site.



The variations will be more extreme in colder northern areas and in the wetter western regions.

The natural instability of standard species over the seasons often causes premature failure in traditional solvent based coatings, particularly as they embrittle with ageing. It has been a significant factor in the switch to more flexible waterbased protective coatings.

Under normal circumstances, exterior joinery is designed to accommodate some natural movement of timber, and ideally the standard species are stored and machined in factories with controlled humidity. Typically, standard species moisture content around 14% is recommended for controlled production environments.

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Where the joinery producer does not have humidity control, care has to be taken with items produced in the winter, when the relative humidity on site is likely to be high and wider tolerances may be required to prevent 'sticking' problems arising.

Dimensional changes are most significant on larger section sizes. Door stiles, double or French doors and bi-fold systems produced from dry timber are particularly problematic, as the swelling effect is multiplied.

We recommend speaking with your timber supplier to request the moisture content specification and subsequently monitor moisture levels throughout the manufacturing process.

The example below shows the effect of moisture content on a typical exterior panel door:

- Moisture content of timber in joinery shop: 10%
- Moisture content of joinery on site: up to 22%
- Expected dimension change: 4%
- Stile width in joinery shop: 120mm
- Dimension change (width) due to moisture: 4.8mm
- Total width change (two stiles): 9.6mm

WOOD MOISTURE CONTENT FOR MACHINING AND PAINTING



For more detailed information and practical actions you can take regarding moisture in different stages of processing, download our chart 'Moisture Content to machine & paint wood'

Find it in the 'Preparation' section of the Teknos Technical Library at [.teknos.com](https://www.teknos.com)

Modern factory installed hinge systems allow about 10mm of adjustment. This should be sufficient for most situations if the frames are accurately machined and they have sufficient tolerance.

Sticking timber doors and windows can be an irritating and costly source of snagging items. However with appropriate design tolerances, manufacturing process controls, the use of more stable timbers, and ideally moisture control during production, the problems can be avoided.



Always refer to the Technical Datasheet for full instructions on how to use Teknos products.

For further support, contact your local Teknos coating expert or visit [teknos.com](https://www.teknos.com)