



We field occasional calls from customers concerning warped butcher blocks. While it may appear that a warped block is defective and unusable, the truth is warp is almost always a symptom of the environment and a problem that can be easily remedied.

Wood is a organic material and hygroscopic, meaning it gains moisture in a damp environment and loses moisture in a dry environment. When moisture is gained or lost in an unbalanced manner from the bottom of the block to the top of the block, wood warps. The Wood Welded Companies carefully dries our lumber so that we can reduce the potential for warp. Unfortunately, due to environmental conditions during storage or at the installation site the potential is still there in every block.

When you realize that warp is caused by a moisture imbalance, it becomes easier to diagnose the problem. Here are some common conditions that may cause warp:

Has your block recently moved from one environment to another or has the weather dramatically changed? There is a chance that humidity levels in the air has caused the block to gain or lose moisture. Place the butcher block indoors on a pair of sawhorses, with the warp faced down. As the wood acclimates to its new environment, it will straighten.

Did you cut the butcher block? It is extremely important to ensure that all sides and edges of a finished butcher block receive an equal coating of finish. Often, customers will cut out a sink or range and leave the cut edges exposed. Those exposed edges allow for moisture to penetrate the block, thus causing warp and other issues. After any cutting, apply a few coats of the Good Stuff to cut edges after sanding.

Is the block installed on a substrate or stored flat on the floor or another block? Butcher blocks need exposure to air on both the top and the bottom. If you are planning on installing your block over a substrate of any kind, please be sure to add a few washers as spacers so that air can move freely beneath the block. Also store your blocks with air space between them.

Is the block being soaked with water? Excessive moisture or standing water can penetrate the finish and cause warp. Ensure that the block is dried after cleaning and never store or install outdoors.

Is the environment effecting the top surface different than that effecting the bottom? Sometimes there are environmental conditions unique to the installation site which can cause warp. An example would be an HVAC system which blows warm dry air directly to only one side of a block. These conditions can certainly cause an imbalance in moisture.

Did you order block oiled? Blocks that are oiled or unfinished are highly susceptible to warping, especially during the humid summer months. If unfinished butcher blocks are not oiled regularly, they will warp and eventually crack. So how often do you need to oil your block? Once a day for the first week. Once a week for the first month. Once a month forever or whenever the block looks dry.

Were slotted brackets used for installation? A situation that can mimic warp is when mounting screws are not allowed to move as a top expands and contracts with changes in relative humidity. Please be sure to allow for wood movement across the grain when choosing a bracket for anchoring a top to a base. Failing to do so can bind a top up which can look a lot like warp.

While these are all common conditions that may cause warp, there are others. In the end, an imbalance of moisture from top to bottom is the only cause of warp. Bringing the moisture levels back to normal will return the block to flat.

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