

Laminate Flooring

Alternative to Hardwood Flooring



Laminate flooring is moderately expensive, with a cost generally between that of vinyl and hardwood flooring. It's easier to install than hardwood and much more durable and good-looking than easy-to-install vinyl.

Laminate flooring has an inner core and a glued-on layer or layers of outer material. Many types of laminate flooring simulate wood; some look like marble or granite. A popular alternative to hardwood or vinyl, high-quality laminate flooring resists staining, wear and fading much better than wood while providing its looks and appeal. It's durable -- about 10 times stronger than a kitchen countertop -- and water-resistant, so it can be used in a bathroom as well as a kitchen or hallway.

Step 1; Stack the Laminate Flooring before Installation

Temperature and humidity can affect flooring planks. Acclimate the flooring in the house for 48 hours before installation. Stack the laminate flooring being used flat on the floor. Remove any plastic wrapping from the boxes and leave air space around each box to allow air to freely circulate around them. Have about 10 percent more flooring than the square feet of area of the room since you'll waste just a little when cutting some pieces.

Step 2: Clean the Subfloor, Remove Base Molding

Clean the subfloor to make sure it's free of any dirt and debris. If installing on top of a new concrete floor wait until the floor is fully cured, 28 days approximately. Using a pry bar and hammer, carefully remove all base molding, debris and all foreign matter (if necessary) and place it out of the way.

Step 3: Install the Vapor Barrier and Underlay.

If required, start by laying out the vapor barrier one row at a time from the longest wall of the room. When joining two sheets of barrier together, follow the manufacturer's directions. Some manufacturers will have you overlap the vapor barrier and some will have you butt each row against the previous one.

Laminate flooring usually rests on a foam-cushion underlayment and may be installed over existing vinyl flooring. Because it's not glued or nailed down, it's easy to remove if you get tired of it. The tongue-in-groove floor planks are glued together over the underlayment, and baseboards hold the floor at the edges to form what's called a floating floor.



Step 4: Trim the Door Jambs

Lay a piece of flooring flat on the subfloor and up against the door jambs. Use it as a guide to mark the jambs so that the new flooring can slide underneath the jamb. Use a “flat” saw or a coping saw to cut the jambs, making sure to cut parallel to the subfloor. This will give the floor and jamb a nice finished look without having to remove the entire jamb.



Step 5: Install the First Row

For the best appearance, lay planks parallel to the longest wall. Install the first plank with the groove toward the wall. Place 1/2" spacers against the wall and push the first plank up against them. These spaces create an expansion gap so that the floor can "breathe" (expand and contract) and not warp or buckle. This gap will be covered later with base molding. The spacers also allow the floor to have a firm base to install against. Place the spacers about every 12 inches along the wall and at the end of each plank against adjoining walls.





Or you can use plastic spacers if available as shown below;

Step 6: Install the Flooring

For each plank, match tongue to groove and tap it into place using a scrap piece of flooring to protect the planks. Make sure the pieces fit snugly together and that there are no gaps along the length of the planks. While installing subsequent rows, stagger the joints of the flooring. When starting a new row, offset it six to eight inches so the joints at the ends of planks are not lined up row to row (which can weaken the floor and create a too-uniform look).





Step 7: Install the Last Plank

The last plank will need to be trimmed to fit. To mark the plank to the correct width place a plank directly over the next to last plank and place another on top of that and slide the top plank until it sits evenly against spacers against the wall. Draw a line along the plank below the top plank along the edge of the top plank. This will mark the width of the gap between the next to the last plank and the wall. Rip cut the plank along this line and install.

Step 8: Install Thresholds and Base Molding

Install any thresholds between the end of the flooring and any open doors where the flooring ends. Thresholds come in different styles to accommodate the kind and height of the flooring the new laminate floor butts up against. Remove the spacers and install base molding such as Tees, F-end and Skirting's as required to cover the expansion gap.



Some Laminate floor types needed to be glued together, always apply a generous amount of the adhesive to the groove and slide the tongue into it. Wipe away all excess glue before it.



o

Culled from James Calloway