

INSTALL CORK FLOORING

Cork flooring is a popular choice for homeowners looking for a uniquely beautiful, durable and ecologically-friendly alternative to traditional hardwood floors. Below are the essential things you'll need to know during your cork flooring installation. For more detailed information on what to do before, during and after your installation, see the full **Installing Cork Flooring** guide on FindAnyFloor.com.

CORK INSTALLATION METHODS

Cork flooring can be installed one of two ways:

- **Floated Cork Planks** – Cork planks are clicked and locked together above the subfloor.
- **Glue Down Cork Tiles** – Solid or veneered cork tiles are glued to the subfloor.

TOOLS AND MATERIALS

You will need most of the general tools and materials on the first list plus anything specific for your installation method.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4' or 6' level | <input type="checkbox"/> Hammer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broom | <input type="checkbox"/> Pencil |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carpenter's square | <input type="checkbox"/> Safety goggles and mask |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chalk line | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft rubber mallet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cork flooring | <input type="checkbox"/> Tapping block or clean piece of scrap wood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric and/or hand saw, jig saw, table saw or circular saw with a carbide tipped blade | <input type="checkbox"/> Tape measure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foam roller | <input type="checkbox"/> Top coat finish (if required) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Utility knife |

Floating Installation

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crow, pull or power bar | <input type="checkbox"/> Spacers/wedges |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic sheeting (moisture barrier) | <input type="checkbox"/> Underlayment |

Glue Down Installation

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 75-100 lb roller | <input type="checkbox"/> Paint brush and roller or trowel (for adhesive) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adhesive | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponges |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gloves | |

PREPARE THE FLOOR

- Cork flooring can be installed in most On Grade and Above Grade installation areas. Cork may be installed in wet areas (such as bathrooms) if approved by your manufacturer.
- Glued down cork tiles and floated cork planks can be installed above wood (APA plywood) subfloors and concrete subfloors. Floated cork planks can also be installed above solid-surface existing flooring (vinyl, tile, hardwood, etc.).
- Concrete subfloors must be at least 30 days old to ensure all moisture in the slab has evaporated.
- If approved by the manufacturer, cork flooring can be installed over radiant heating systems.

- All subfloors and existing flooring must be level and structurally sound. Remove all existing carpet, padding or damaged flooring. Do not remove the existing flooring if asbestos are present. Follow all local, state and federal guidelines when handling and/or disposing of asbestos.
- Perform all moisture tests according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Acceptable ranges are:
 - **Calcium Chloride** – Not to exceed 3 lbs per 24 hrs per 1000 sq ft.
 - **pH Alkalinity** – Less than 10 on the pH scale.
- Always use a moisture barrier. For floated cork, install a 6mm polyethylene/plastic sheeting above your subfloor. For glue down installations, seal your concrete subfloor as directed by your manufacturer. Always choose a sealer that is compatible and recommended by your manufacturer so as to not void your warranty.
- Ensure your subfloor is level and free from all dips, valleys or imperfections (such as drywall mud, paint overspray, concrete chips, etc.). Scrape your subfloor clean. Sand down all high areas. Use self-leveling compound to level all low areas.
- Allow your cork flooring to acclimatize to the installation environment per your manufacturer's recommendations (usually between 24-72 hrs). This usually means keeping the room between 60° and 85° F with a relative humidity of between 45%-70%.
- Undercut door casings in the installation area. Install your cork flooring under all casings for a more professional looking installation.
- Remove all molding and doors.
- Sweep and vacuum your subfloor before installing your cork.
- Always install safely using the proper safety equipment. Follow all manufacturer safety recommendations.

TIPS AND TRICKS

- Install floated cork planks parallel to the main incoming light source. In narrow rooms, install parallel to the longest wall.
- Always store your cork away from windows, doors, vents, outside walls and direct sunlight. Never store cork flooring in the garage.
- Always follow your manufacturer's recommendations when determining your expansion/contraction perimeter. Generally a 1/4" or 3/8" expansion perimeter is sufficient. More expansion/contraction room may be necessary in humid climates. Expansion joints may be required for large installation areas.

- Inspect all planks and tiles before you install them. Do not install discolored or damaged flooring. Cut away damaged areas or use slightly discolored flooring in pantries or closets where the color variations may not be as noticeable.
- Use planks or tiles from 3-5 different packages at a time to ensure natural color variations are evenly distributed throughout your floor.
- Always use carbide-tipped saw blades and cut into the prefinished side of the cork first to avoid chipping the finish.
- Do all your cutting outside or in another area to keep the installation area free from sawdust and wood chips.
- Put tools on a piece of cardboard on top of your cork flooring so that you do not scratch the surface.
- Always work from your subfloor NOT your newly installed cork floor.

FLOATING CORK INSTALLATION

Cork planks are generally installed as floating floors (also called glueless floors). Most floated cork floors are milled with interlocking joints on each tongue and groove. When installed, these joints lock together forming a solid floor.

The following instructions are for click and lock floating cork floors. Since there are a variety of click lock styles on the market, always follow your manufacturer's specific installation information and only use these instructions as a reference.



TIPS AND TRICKS

- Most manufacturer's highly recommend using an additional cork or foam underlayment beneath all floated cork floors, especially if one is not pre-attached. For more specific information about acceptable underlayments, see the full **Installing Cork Flooring** guide on FindAnyFloor.com.
- Consider calculating the number of rows of cork you'll need to complete your floor. If your first and last row are very different widths (for example, your first row is 12" and your last row is 2") re-calculate so that these rows are more equal.
- Scribe fit your first and last row to match any contours in the wall. This ensures your cork floor goes down straight even if your walls are not.
- Stagger all joints 2-3 times the width of a cork plank for an even looking floor. Avoid H-joints whenever possible.
- Follow your manufacturer's recommendations for board length (usually no less than 10") when starting new rows. (You may be able to use the remainder of the plank you cut from the previous row.) Doing this helps ensure the joints are staggered evenly.
- Never hit the cork flooring directly. Use a tapping block to move the cork planks into place, if approved by your manufacturer.
- Many professional installers work from left to right, but always choose the direction that is most comfortable for you or recommended by the flooring manufacturer.



INSTALL THE UNDERLAYMENT

Install your moisture barrier and underlayment (if desired) according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

1. Layout the plastic sheeting above the whole subfloor. Sheetting should overlap 8" at all seams and extend up walls 2". Secure the entire length of each seam with waterproof tape (such as duct tape).
2. Layout the cork or foam underlayment so it is flush with all walls. Tape all seams together. Do not overlap. Avoid placing underlayment seams directly on top of moisture barrier seams.



INSTALL THE FIRST ROW

Take extra time when installing the first row of floating cork. It is important that this row be straight even if the walls are not.

1. Along the longest wall, measure out your expansion spacing in at least two places and snap a chalk line.
2. Lay out the cork planks but DO NOT click together yet. Follow your manufacturer's recommendations when choosing to face the tongue or groove toward the wall. Add spacers to ensure your expansion spacing is adequate. Scribe fit planks where needed to match wall contours. Make sure this row is completely straight.
3. Once satisfied with the fit, click and lock the first row of cork flooring together. Planks should fit tightly together to form an almost seamless floor.
4. At the end of the wall, measure, cut, install and lock the last cork plank in place. Use a pull bar if needed to fit the plank between the wall and the first row. Add a spacer at the end of the first row.
5. Evaluate the first row to ensure it is straight and level. Adjust where needed.



INSTALL THE MAIN PART OF THE FLOOR

1. Use a partial plank (10" or longer in length) to start the second row. If needed, cut a full plank in half and use one half as your starter plank.
2. Click and lock the cork plank to the first row.
3. Work your way across the floor until you reach the last row. Place spacers along all walls to ensure adequate and equal expansion spacing.



INSTALL THE LAST ROW

1. Measure out your expansion spacing in at least two places and snap a chalk line.
2. Lay out the last row of cork planks. Scribe fit (if necessary) so that the flooring matches the contours in the wall. Make sure this last row is completely straight.
3. Once satisfied with the fit, click and lock each plank in the last row together with the rest of the floor. Use a pull bar (if needed) to fit planks between the wall and the floor.

- Evaluate the last row to ensure it is straight and level. Adjust where needed.

If your cork floor does not require a top coat finish, you can begin using the floor as soon as you've locked the last plank in place.



APPLY THE FINISH

Some manufacturers require that a top coat finish be applied to the whole floor once installed. This seals all seams and helps protect the floor from moisture and wear. ALWAYS follow your manufacturer's instructions if a finish is required for your floor. Not applying one may void your warranty.

- Sweep and/or vacuum the newly installed floor.
- Roll the recommended finish across the floor using a 3/8" foam roller. Apply one thick coat with long even strokes. Overlap roller paths slightly to ensure the whole floor is covered. Do not over roll.
- Allow the finish to dry completely according to the manufacturer's recommendations (usually 4 hours to the touch and 24 hours to dry completely).
- Allow the whole floor to cure completely (usually 8 days). Follow all the manufacturer's recommendations during this curing time.

GLUED DOWN INSTALLATION

Solid and veneered cork tiles are generally glued directly to the subfloor using a quality flooring adhesive. Always use an adhesive recommended by your flooring manufacturer to ensure products are compatible.



CREATE A GUIDELINE GRID

You'll install cork tiles much like ceramic or vinyl tiles.

- Snap a chalk line between the center points of each opposite wall to divide the room into four equal quadrants.
- Layout a row of loose cork tiles in all directions at the center intersection point and evaluate the fit. If there are small cuts (less than 1/2") along walls, move the starting point down by 1/2 a cork tile width and re-snap your chalk lines. If desired, snap chalk lines to divide the larger quadrants into smaller sections. Be sure to leave an expansion perimeter.
- When you're satisfied with the fit, gather up all the cork tiles and set aside. If you're creating a pattern, you can leave the pattern out in one quadrant as a guide.



GLUE THE TILES TO THE SUBFLOOR

Cork tiles are glued to the subfloor with one of two methods:

- Wet-set** – An adhesive is troweled or rolled out onto the subfloor. The cork tiles are immediately set into the wet glue.
- Dry-set** – An adhesive is troweled or rolled out onto the subfloor and allowed to dry for 20-30 minutes. Once the glue is tacky, cork tiles are set into the glue.

Always follow your manufacturer's recommendations when choosing which method to use.

- Apply the adhesive to the subfloor in one quadrant according to the manufacturer's instructions. Apply adhesive slightly over your guidelines so you can install tiles right up to the lines. Allow the adhesive to dry, if using the dry-set method.
- Starting at the center intersection point, install the first cork tile.
- Place tiles on either side of the first one so that you work towards the walls in each direction.
 - If using the wet-set method, slide tiles into the adhesive.
 - If using the dry-set method, place tiles exactly where they need to go.
- At walls, scribe fit tiles.
- When all tiles are installed in one quadrant, roll with a 75-100 pound roller as directed by your manufacturer.
- Repeat steps 1 through 5 to install your cork tiles in each quadrant.
- When the whole floor is installed, re-roll with a 75-100 pound roller as directed by your manufacturer.



LET THE FLOOR SET

Allow the adhesive to set for about 24 hours or as recommended by your manufacturer. During this time, do not walk or place anything upon the newly installed cork floor.



APPLY THE FINISH

Some manufacturers require that a top coat finish (either urethane or wax) be applied to the whole floor once it is installed and the adhesive has set. The finish seals all seams and helps protect the floor from moisture and wear. ALWAYS follow your manufacturer's instructions if a finish is required for your floor. Not applying one may void your warranty.

*NOTE: The following instructions are for urethane finishes. If applying a wax finish, follow the manufacturer's application instructions. For more information about finishes and wear layers, see the full **Installing Cork Flooring** guide on FindAnyFloor.com.*

- Sweep and/or vacuum the newly installed floor.
- Roll the urethane finish across the floor using a 3/8" foam roller. Apply one thick coat with long even strokes. Overlap roller paths slightly to ensure the whole floor is covered. Do not over roll.
- Allow the urethane finish to dry completely according to the manufacturer's recommendations (usually 4 hours to the touch and 24 hours to dry completely).
- Allow the whole floor to cure completely (usually 8 days). Follow all the manufacturer's recommendations during this curing time.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE AREAS

You may have to install your cork flooring in a variety of special circumstance areas such as:

- **Around Fireplaces/Brickwork** – You have two options:
 - Undercut the brickwork and install the cork flooring underneath. The brickwork will cover all expansion spacing.
 - Install the cork flooring flush with brickwork and use end molding to hide the expansion/contraction spacing.
- **On Stairs** – Cork flooring should NOT be installed on stairs for safety reasons.

For more detailed information about installing cork in these areas, see the full **Installing Cork Flooring** guide on FindAnyFloor.com.

TRANSITIONS AND TRIM

Install transitions and trim to hide all expansion/contraction spacing and put the finishing touches on your room.

**INSTALL TRANSITIONS**

- **T-Molding** – For transitions between cork floors and interior/exterior doorways and transitions between similar height flooring surfaces.

- **Reducer (Flush or Overlap)** – For transitions between cork floors and lower height flooring surfaces (such as carpeting, vinyl or tile/stone).
- **End Molding/Square Nose/Universal Edge** – For transitions between cork floors and similar height floors, such as carpet. End molding can also be used for outside threshold transitions and around brickwork.
- **Floor Vents** – Vent covers designed to coordinate with your cork floor.

Cork transitions are installed with adhesive (most common) or using trim tracks.

**INSTALL TRIM**

Trim any plastic sheeting and install all wall base, shoe base and quarter round to hide the expansion spacing around the perimeter of the room. Do NOT glue the trim to the subfloor. Always glue to the wall and nail at an angle every 16". Caulk significant gaps between the trim and the wall.

**CAULK THE FLOOR**

Use flexible, mildew resistant silicone caulk to seal area where the trim meets the wall around all bathtubs, showers and other wet areas. This ensures that if water drips down the wall, it will not leak behind the trim to the subfloor.

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