

## INSTALL LAMINATE FLOORING

Installing laminate flooring is a relatively easy way to add a beautiful, durable floor to your home or office. Below are the essential things you'll need to know during your laminate installation. For more detailed information on what to do before, during and after your laminate installation, see the full **Installing Laminate Flooring** guide on FindAnyFloor.com.

### LAMINATE INSTALLATION METHODS

Laminate can be installed one of two ways:

- **Glueless Floating** – Laminate boards are clicked and locked together above the subfloor.
- **Glued Floating** – The tongues and groove are secured to each other with a flooring adhesive. Some glued laminate comes with the adhesive already applied.

### TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4' or 6' level                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Rubber mallet                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adhesive remover (if needed)                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Safety goggles                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broom  | <input type="checkbox"/> Spacers                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carpenter's square                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Tape measure                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chalk line   | <input type="checkbox"/> Tapping block                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crow or pull bar                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Tongue and groove adhesive (if needed) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric and/or hand saw with carbide tipped blade | <input type="checkbox"/> Utility knife                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hammer   | <input type="checkbox"/> Utility towels                         |

### PREPARE THE FLOOR

- Laminate can be installed above wood (plywood, plywood and OSB board) subfloors and concrete subfloors on any grade level.
- If approved by the manufacturer, laminate can be installed over radiant heating systems and existing flooring (tile, porous stone, hardwood, bamboo and vinyl).
- All subfloors and existing flooring must be structurally sound and level. Remove all existing carpet, padding or damaged flooring. Do not remove any existing flooring if you find asbestos. Follow all local, state and federal guidelines when handling and/or disposing of asbestos.
- Install laminate parallel to incoming light sources. In narrow rooms, install parallel to the longest wall.
- Perform all moisture tests according to the manufacturer's recommendations. If necessary, install a 6mm polyethylene/plastic sheeting above your subfloor for moisture protection.
- Allow your laminate to acclimatize to the installation environment per your manufacturer's recommendations (usually between 48-96 hrs). This usually means keeping the room between 65° and 85° F with a relative humidity of between 30%-90%.
- Ensure your subfloor is level and free from all dips, valleys or imperfections (such as drywall mud, paint overspray, etc.). Scrape your subfloor clean. Sand down

any high areas. Use self-leveling compound to level all low areas.

- Consider using a suitable underlayment. Some laminate comes with pre-attached underlayments. If your laminate does not, cork, standard foam, combination foam/film and upgraded foam are all good choices. For more specific information about these underlayments, see the full **Installing Laminate Flooring** guide on FindAnyFloor.com.
- If desired, undercut door casings in the installation area.
- Remove all molding and doors.
- Sweep and vacuum your floor before installing your laminate.
- Always install safely using the proper safety equipment. Follow all manufacturer safety recommendations.

### TIPS AND TRICKS

- Always store your laminate away from doors, vents, windows, direct sunlight and outside walls. Never store your laminate in the garage.
- Always leave at least a ¼" expansion perimeter. More expansion/contraction room may be necessary in humid climates. Always check with your manufacturer.
- Using a cork or foam underlayment is highly recommended when installing in multi-story residences.
- Consider calculating the number of rows of laminate you'll need to complete your floor. If your first and last row are very different widths (for example, your first row is 4" and your last row is 1") re-calculate so that these rows are more equal.
- Stagger all joints 2-3 times the width of a laminate board for an even looking floor. Avoid H-joints whenever possible.
- Scribe fit your first and last row to match the wall contours. This ensures your laminate floor goes down straight even if your walls are not.
- Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for board length (usually between 8"-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.
- Inspect all boards before you install them. Do not install discolored or damaged boards. Cut away damaged areas and use the remainder to start rows. Use slightly discolored boards in pantries or closets where they may not be as noticeable.
- Always use carbide-tipped saw blades and cut into the prefinished side of the laminate first to avoid chipping the finish.
- Never hit the laminate flooring directly. Use a tapping block to move the laminate boards into position, when needed.

- Do all your cutting 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 laminate so that you do not scratch the surface.
- 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.
- Always work from your subfloor NOT your newly installed laminate floor.



### INSTALL THE UNDERLAYMENT

If needed, install your plastic sheeting, cork, foam or other underlayment according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

## **GLUELESS FLOATING INSTALLATION**

The majority of laminate floors on the market today use the glueless (click and lock) installation method. Only use these instructions a reference as there are a variety of laminate click lock styles. Always follow the instructions provided by your specific laminate manufacturer.



### INSTALL THE FIRST ROW

Take extra time when installing the first row of glueless laminate. It is essential that this row be straight even if the walls are not.

1. Along the longest wall, measure out your expansion spacing (usually  $\frac{1}{4}$ " ) in at least two places and snap a chalk line.
2. Lay out the glueless laminate with the groove toward the wall but do not lock together yet. Add spacers between the flooring and the wall. Make sure this first row is completely straight. Scribe fit (if necessary) so that the laminate matches the contours of the wall.
3. Once satisfied with the fit, click and lock the first row of laminate together. There should be no space between locked boards.
4. At the end of the wall, measure, cut and lock the last laminate plank in place. Add a spacer at the end of the first row.
5. Evaluate this first row to ensure it is straight and level. Adjust where needed.



### INSTALL THE MAIN PART OF THE FLOOR

1. Use a partial board (approx 8"-10" in length) to start the second row.
2. Click and lock laminate boards together as you did with the first row.
3. Work your way across the floor until you reach the last row.



### INSTALL THE LAST ROW

1. Measure out your expansion spacing (usually  $\frac{1}{4}$ " ) in at least two places and snap a chalk line.
2. Lay out the last row of laminate with the tongue or cut part toward the wall. Scribe fit (if necessary) so that the glueless laminate matches any 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.
4. Evaluate the last row to ensure it is straight and level. Adjust where needed.

Your glueless laminate floor does not need any time to set. Once you lock the last board into place, you can remove all spacers and begin using your new laminate floor.

## **GLUED FLOATING INSTALLATION**

There are two types of glued laminate:

- **Pre-Glued** – An adhesive is applied at the factory to each tongue and groove. You wet the adhesive to activate it.
- **Glued** – You apply an adhesive to the tongue and/or groove of each board. (This is the original, and messiest way, to install laminate.)

Only use these instructions a reference as there are a variety of glued laminate products on the market. Always follow the instructions provided by your specific laminate manufacturer.

*NOTE: If using an adhesive, always choose a urethane based product designed for flooring tongues and grooves. Do not use adhesives that are trowled onto the subfloor or that list water as an ingredient unless specifically recommended by your manufacturer.*



### INSTALL THE FIRST ROW

Take extra time when installing the first row of glued laminate. It is critical that this row be straight even if the walls are not. Remember, you are NOT gluing the laminate to the subfloor.

1. Along the longest wall, measure out your expansion spacing (approx  $\frac{1}{4}$ " ) in at least two spots and snap a chalk line.
2. Lay out the laminate with the groove toward the wall but do not glue yet. Scribe fit (if necessary) so that the laminate boards match any contours along the wall. Add spacers between the wall and the laminate flooring. Make sure this first row is completely straight.
3. Once satisfied with the fit, remove and stack planks in the order they will be installed. Do not to scratch the finish while stacking.
4. Wet to activate the pre-glued adhesive. Or apply adhesive along the entire top of the tongue of the first board. Apply glue on the bottom of the groove of the second plank. Fit tightly together on the floor. Wipe away any excess glue. Place a spacer between each plank and the wall.
5. Work your way down the wall installing the laminate.

6. At the end of the wall, measure, cut and install the last piece of laminate board in the first row. Place a spacer between the laminate and the wall.
7. Evaluate the first row to ensure it is straight and level. Adjust where needed.



### INSTALL THE MAIN PART OF THE FLOOR

1. Use a short plank (it should be at least 8"-10" in length) to start the second row.
2. Wet to activate the pre-glued adhesive. Or apply adhesive to the entire top of the tongue of the installed plank and the entire bottom of the groove on the board to be installed (on both the short and long sides). Fit the laminate boards tightly together and wipe away any excess adhesive.
3. Work your way across the floor until you reach the last row. Install spacers where needed along the walls.



### INSTALL THE LAST ROW

1. Measure out your expansion spacing (approx ¼") in at least two spots and snap a chalk line.
2. Lay out the laminate with the tongue or cut part toward the wall but do not glue yet. Scribe fit (if necessary) to match any wall contours. Make sure this last row is completely straight.
3. Once satisfied with the fit, remove and stack laminate boards in the order they will be installed. Take care not to scratch the finish while stacking.
4. Apply the adhesive as before and install the entire last row. Fit all boards tightly together and place spacers along the wall where necessary.
5. Evaluate the last row to ensure it is straight and level. Adjust where needed.



### 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 on or place anything upon the newly installed laminate floor. Leave all spacers in place until the floor is completely dry.

### ***SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE AREAS***

Laminate flooring can be installed in a variety of special circumstance areas such as on stairs or around fireplaces. For more detailed information about installing laminate in these areas, see the full **Installing Laminate Flooring** guide on FindAnyFloor.com.



### INSTALL ON STAIRS

Generally, laminate is only installed on enclosed stairwells so that the walls hide the unfinished edges of the laminate. You'll

use the same laminate as you did for your floor and add stair nose to create the proper overhang. When installed on stairs, your laminate will be glued directly to the subfloor. Laminate should never be floated on stairs for safety reasons.

For complete installation instructions and safety information, see, the full **Installing Laminate Flooring** guide on FindAnyFloor.com.



### INSTALL AROUND BRICKWORK

You have two choices when installing laminate around brickwork (such as fireplaces):

- Undercutting the brickwork and installing the laminate underneath. The brickwork will cover all expansion spacing.
- Installing the laminate flush with brickwork and using end molding to hide any expansion/contraction spacing.

### ***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 laminate floors and interior/exterior doorways and transitions between similar height flooring.
- **Reducer** – For transitions between laminate floors and lower height floors (such as carpeting, vinyl or tile/stone).
- **Overlap Stair Nose/Step Down** – Used at steps (such as into a sunken living room) to provide the proper overhang and on full staircases.
- **End Molding/Square Nose/Universal Edge** – For similar height floors, carpet or outside threshold transitions. End molding is also used around brickwork.

Laminate transitions are usually secured using trim tracks. (Check with your retailer when purchasing trim tracks as you may have to purchase the tracks separately because they are not included with the molding.) In some cases, you may glue transition pieces to the subfloor with a quality adhesive.



### INSTALL TRANSITIONS

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.



### **CORRECT DEFECTS**

Use putty sticks, wood filler or stain to fill nail holes or correct any defects. Only use fillers designed specifically for laminate floors.



### **SEAL THE FLOOR**

Use silicone sealant and/or weather stripping to seal all expansion/contraction spaces near moisture prone areas (such as outside doors or kitchen appliances) as directed by your manufacturer.