



Floating Floor Installation Instructions

Even though installing a floating cork floor is quite simple, there are several things to consider in order to achieve successful, long lasting results. Be sure to understand all installation instructions before commencing. Contact us for technical assistance if unsure of installation procedures.

SUBFLOOR

The subfloor needs to be in good condition, structurally sound, level and smooth to allow cork panels to lay flat. Hollow spots, voids, and bumps in subfloors must be repaired or removed. If not these deformities can cause cork panels to bounce or sag when walked on. Uneven subfloors may cause the locking system of the panels to fail, and the floor to separate. Areas in the subfloor that could cause cork panels not to lie flat need to be sanded or chipped flush with the surrounding area. If the subfloor has major humps or valleys, it must first be leveled with a leveling compound.

Floating cork floors can be installed over any hard surface floors such as:

- Cement
- Wood or laminates
- Vinyl
- Stone
- Plywood
- Linoleum
- Ceramic

Any other hard surface floors; Cork floating floors should not be installed over carpet.

Moisture precautions:

Cork floating floors should never be installed over any areas where there is any indication of moisture beneath subfloors. Moisture problems are especially common in basements. All subfloor moisture problems must be permanently eliminated prior to installation.

Moisture barrier:

Even if no moisture emission is apparent, it is still recommended that a moisture barrier be used on all subgrade installations (basements) or concrete slab installations. This includes concrete floors topped with vinyl or other resilient flooring. Use a vapor barrier (polyethylene plastic rolls or sheets) with a minimum thickness of .01 inches (or 6 mil). Allow for at least a 6 inch overlap between sheet or roll edges and tape together. Along the room edges run the vapor barrier up the wall at least 3 inches. Once the floor is installed the barrier sheets should be trimmed down so the edging is hidden after the baseboards or quarter rounds are affixed.

If a concrete subfloor was recently poured be sure the concrete is completely cured and dried before installing floating floors. Although the concrete may appear cured and dried to touch and appearance, it takes several weeks (and sometimes several months) for all the moisture to dissipate from newly poured concrete (length of time depends on humidity, location, climate). Rather wait longer prior to commencing with installation or contact us as to how to determine if the concrete is fully dried.

TOOLS

The following are tools that are used in a typical floating floor installation:

- Hammer
- Tapping block
- Tape Measure
- Spacers
- Saw

Hint:

Although any saw will do, the easiest saw for the cutting of panels is a jig saw. Remember that each cut end or edge will be hidden, either under trim at room edges or under transition strips. These cuts, therefore, do not need to be perfectly straight.

PRE-INSTALLATION

Cork panels should be placed in the room of installation at least 72 hours before the installation begins to allow for acclimatization. At this time also check panels to ensure desired pattern, color, and shading and for any possible imperfections. To avoid surprises or disappointments, closely review and understand the Facts About The Natural Characteristics of Cork. Cork has natural shade variations and the blending of shades is the installers responsibility.

Cut all door jambs so that the cork panels will slide underneath. This can be done using a handsaw and a piece of the cork panel as a guide. Always vacuum the area when any cutting is done to ensure there is no debris on the floor.

INSTALLATION

Install the first panel with the tongue, or male, side of the panel facing the wall (although this tongue on the panels by the wall should be cut off). This will make it easier to assemble the last row. Using spacers, it is very important to maintain a minimum gap of 3/8" between the cork panels and all walls, cabinets, transition areas, etc. This allows for the natural expansion and contraction of the floor. When placing a panel along a wall, always cut the tongue off the panel so the tongue width is not included in the expansion space measurement. Place spacers along the edges of the walls and cabinets to ensure the minimum 3/8" expansion gap is maintained.

Panels are connected by gently tapping two tiles together. Always use a hard tapping block (ie: wooden block) placed flat on the floor and against the edge (female side) of the tile. This will prevent tiles from getting damaged. Never tap tiles directly without the use of a tapping block and never tap on the block if it is resting on the tongue.

Install panels with joints (seams) staggered at least 12 inches.

Begin each new row with the cut-offs of the prior row. In other words, cut the last panel of the first row and place the cut-off piece at the beginning of the second row. This will ensure staggered seam consistency throughout the floor. Always make sure that the groove and tongue are facing each other.

The last row may require the panels to be cut lengthwise to fit the floor.

Hint:

To measure the cut, place the panels that need to be cut up against the wall but overlapping the last row already installed. Remember to maintain the 3/8" expansion gap along the wall using the spacers. For these measuring purposes, make sure the tongue (male) is facing the wall. Mark panels where they need to be cut.

Once all the tiles are installed, remove all spacers, trim moisture barrier, and install 3/4" x 3/4" quarter round along the existing baseboard to hide the gap left to allow for proper expansion and contraction. All transition strips can now be installed as well.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR VARIOUS ROOMS

Kitchens:

If all new cabinets are being installed in the kitchen, install the cabinets first. This also applies in other rooms where built-in structures are planned. The weight of the cabinets (or built-ins) can actually pin the floor down, not allowing it to float as needed with expansion and contraction. Many cabinet manufacturers install a 5/8" thick toe kick, which can be installed after the floor is installed. This eliminates the need for quarter round along the base of the cabinets except at exposed gable ends.

Appliances should be placed on Teflon (or other hard material) sheets so they will not mark or sink into the floor. Additional sheets should be used as gliders when sliding the appliance out to eliminate marking the floor. Never slide or move appliances over cork floors without glider sheets underneath.

The cork panels beneath dishwashers need only be placed under the front feet and the rest of the appliance is leveled accordingly.

Hint:

Although most floating floors are pre-finished with three coats of polyurethane, it is recommended that an extra coat of polyurethane is added after installation to help seal the seams from surface moisture spills. Professional application is suggested. If the floor has been used and is no longer completely new, a degreasing agent needs to be buffed into the floor prior to any additional polyurethane applications. Always check for compatibility between the existing floor and new polyurethane prior to recoating. Contact us if unsure.

Bathrooms:

The same rules apply to bathrooms as kitchens. The main difference is the toilet. Always remove the toilet, and install the cork flooring up to the flange. When reinstalling the toilet it will sit up higher from the original base by the thickness of the new flooring. It may therefore be necessary to either install two wax rings, one on top of the other, or obtain an extender kit. It is also recommended to change the supply line to the tank at this time.

Hallways into bedrooms or from room to room:

Whenever installing a floor in multiple areas that are adjoining through a doorway, it is important to physically separate the floors at each doorway or opening. For example, if floating floors were being installed in a hallway and three bedrooms, this would constitute four separate areas of installation but tied together with T-moldings. The T-moldings separating these areas should fall directly under the doors when closed. If the opening has no door, the T-moldings should be placed in the center of the openings. Remember to maintain the 3/8" expansion gap between the cork and the base of the T-moldings.

Offices:

If rolling chairs are used at desks, place plastic protective floor mats under chairs. Be sure to use mats that do not have the pointed nubs on the bottom.

Existing Fireplace hearths:

A 3/8" expansion gap needs to be maintained between the cork and the hearth. Typically, a T-molding can be placed between the cork and the hearth providing a nice finished look.

MAINTENANCE

Any heavy furniture and chairs should have thick felt pads placed on the feet to help cushion the weight. Heavier objects such as pianos and pool tables may require larger pads under the feet. This will help reduce denting of the floor.

If heavy items are on wheels (pianos, big screen TV's etc) they should not be rolled directly on the cork. Always put a piece of plywood with a packing quilt underneath to move these objects.

No harsh detergents containing any vinegars, pastes, or waxes should be used. A damp cloth may be used to wipe floors. Do not use excessive water. Vacuuming cork floors regularly is recommended.

Repairing Damaged Panels:

It takes a lot of abuse to damage a panel to the point of needing repair, but should a panel be in that state it can be easy to fix. If a whole panel needs to be replaced, simply remove the quarter round nearest the tile, and remove (uninstall) the floor up to the damaged tile. Replace the damaged tile with a new tile, reinstall the floor and replace the quarter round. If the damage is small, it may be possible to use a silicon filler to repair the area.