

PREP A PLYWOOD SUBFLOOR FOR HARDWOOD OR LAMINATE

Skill Level: INTERMEDIATE Give these projects a try if you're a confident DIYer with a good working knowledge of a variety of tools. They can take a day or more to complete. If you can build a birdhouse or install a ceiling fan, your skill level is probably appropriate.

✓ MATERIALS

- Sander
- Long Level
- Tape Measure
- Shop Vac
- Cementitious Leveling Compound
- Underlayment and Moisture/Vapor Barrier—as required by the manufacturer
- Staple Gun
- Back Saw
- Circular Saw
- Drill with Driver Bits
- Screws
- Hammer or Pneumatic Nailer
- Pry Bar
- Ring Shank Nails or Screws
- Pencil
- Moisture Test Kit
- Utility Knife
- Chalk Line and Chalk
- Safety Glasses
- Work Gloves
- Dust Mask
- Knee Pads

Hardwood and laminate flooring add warmth and beauty to any room, and they're also a great way to increase the value of your home. At Lowe's, you'll find a variety of hardwood flooring styles and colors, from domestic species like Oak and Maple to exotics like Brazilian Cherry and Bamboo.

Remember that a good flooring installation starts with a correctly prepared subfloor. So be sure to watch the subfloor prep videos and download the instructions at [Lowe's.com/Videos](https://www.lowes.com/Videos). We show you how to level your floor, check for excess moisture and mark a starting guideline.

GETTING STARTED

01 Determine how much flooring and materials will be needed.

- Multiply length x width of the room.
- Add about 10% to that number to account for any possible mistakes and warped boards.
- **TIP:** You can also use the square footage calculator at [Lowe's.com/Calculators](https://www.lowes.com/Calculators).

02 Remove any carpet or other flooring.

- If you have a vinyl floor, you may be able to install your flooring directly on top of it.
- Check the manufacturer's instructions for additional assistance.

03 Remove all baseboards to create the appropriate gap at the floor edges for expansion, as recommended by the manufacturer.

04 Check clearance at the doorways.

- If a floor plank and underlayment, or adhesive, will not fit under the door casing, cut the casing with a backsaw about 1/16" above the level of the new flooring.



IMPORTANT

Before you begin this project, read the manufacturer's instructions. Make sure you follow all local building codes. If you're not comfortable installing a hardwood floor, call a Lowe's associate for help, as we install many types of flooring.

GETTING STARTED (cont.)

- If a floor plank and underlayment, or adhesive, will not fit under the door, remove the door and trim it with a circular saw about 1/8" above the level of the new flooring.
- **TIP:** If you need to cut the door, get the approximate layout of the cut, and use masking tape on top and bottom of the cut line to reduce splintering as the cut is made. Measure and mark on top of the masking tape.

SUBFLOOR REQUIREMENTS: Clean, Level, Dry and Structurally Sound

**Before you install, your subfloor must meet four requirements:
clean, level, dry and structurally sound.**

01 Clean

1. For a glue-down flooring application, the subfloor must be free of wax, paint, oil, sealers, adhesives or other debris.
 - Use a sander to remove any coating or sealant.
 - Vacuum the floor thoroughly.
2. For nail down, locking or floating installations, you can leave any coating as is, as long as the subfloor is free of dirt and dust.

02 Level

1. Make sure your floor is level.
 - Use a long level and tape measure to check that the floor is level.
 - Typically, the floor must be level and uniform within 3/16" every 10'.
 - Check your wood flooring manufacturer's recommendations.
2. Sand down high spots with the sander.
 - If the high spots are large or there are a lot of them, you might want to rent a random orbital floor sander.
3. Fill in low spots with cementitious leveling compound.
 - If you are using nails or staples to secure your flooring, do not use the leveling compound—it will crack. Follow the flooring manufacturer's instructions.

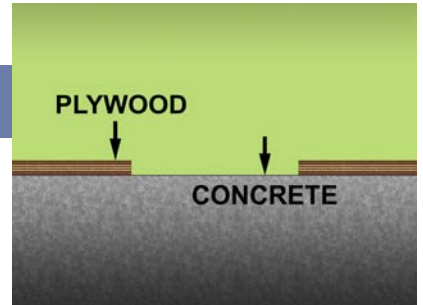
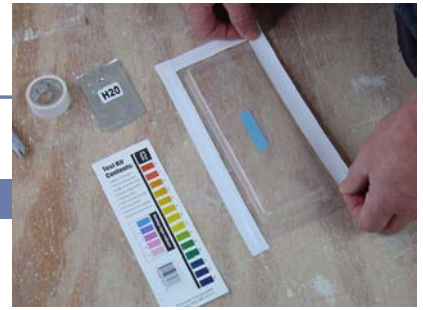


SUBFLOOR REQUIREMENTS:

Clean, Level, Dry and Structurally Sound (cont.)

03 Dry

1. Check the moisture with a moisture test kit.
 - Follow the test kit manufacturer's instructions.
 - If moisture levels are not within the wood flooring manufacturer's recommendations, stop immediately and call a Lowe's associate for help.
2. If you have a subfloor that consists of wood on top of concrete, you'll need to test both floors.



04 Structurally Sound

1. Check for structural integrity.
 - The subfloor must safely support the flooring, furniture, and people in the room.
 - If you're not sure about the integrity of your concrete subfloor, call a Lowe's associate for help.
2. If a wood subfloor has any loose or squeaky boards, screw them to the floor joists (or nail using ring shank nails).
3. Check wood subfloor thickness.
 - Check the manufacturer's requirements about wood subfloor thickness and width, typically the preferred thickness is 3/4".
 - Contact a Lowe's associate if your wood subfloor doesn't meet the manufacturer's requirements.
4. Locking, engineered and laminate flooring may be installed directly over vinyl or linoleum, as long as the floor is no more than two layers thick.

INSTALLING THE UNDERLAYMENT

01 Cover the subfloor with the appropriate underlayment for your type of flooring.

- Depending on the type of floor you install, your underlayment may require a moisture barrier (locking hardwood floors require a moisture barrier like 2-in-1 underlayment).
- A Lowe's associate can tell you what type of underlayment will work best for your materials.
- Some products have the underlayment pre-attached, but you may also need a separate moisture barrier.

02 Install the underlayment according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

- Typically, you roll out the underlayment in strips, joining the edges of each row. Leave the underlayment long at the ends; cut it after you've installed the floor.

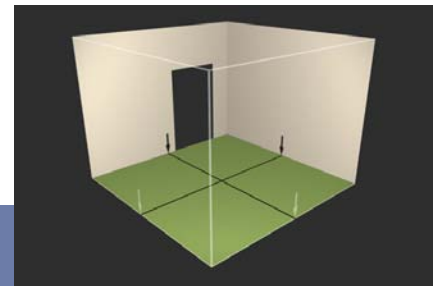


ACCLIMATING TO THE ROOM

- 01** Bring the flooring into the room so the wood planks can acclimate to the room's temperature and humidity for at least 72 hours before installation. This reduces problems associated with moisture, such as warping and fit. Stack the flooring in a flat position in the room or rooms where it is to be installed and allow it to acclimate.

ESTABLISHING A GUIDELINE

- 01** For a wood subfloor, install the planks perpendicular to the floor joists.
- If you choose not to install the planks perpendicular to the floor joists, you will have to reinforce the subfloor to prevent sagging. Call a Lowe's associate for help on reinforcing your subfloor.

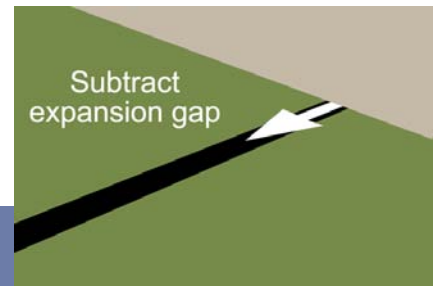


- 02** Measure and mark the center of all four walls at floor level.

- 03** Snap the chalk line overtop the plywood or underlayment between the marks on opposite walls making a cross in the center of the room.

- 04** Determine your starting wall.

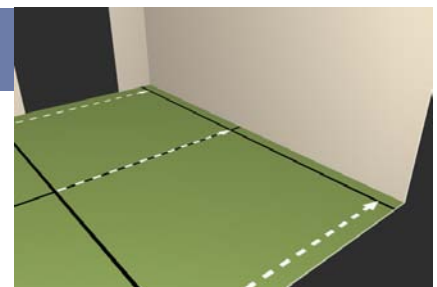
- You will lay the flooring lengthwise to this wall.
- When possible, always begin layout or installation from the straightest wall, generally an outside wall.



- 05** Measure from the center cross to the starting wall, subtract the manufacturer's expansion gap, and mark on the plywood or underlayment by the starting wall.

- 06** Using the center line parallel to the starting wall, measure and mark the same distance on each end of the starting wall.

- If your walls are not square and this distance doesn't allow for the manufacturer's required expansion gap, re-measure this point per the previous step and use this distance to mark the center and opposite corner measurements along the starting wall.



- 07** Snap a line between the marks on the starting wall to form a guideline along the starting wall.

- 08** You will lay the flooring lengthwise along this line.



PREP A PLYWOOD SUBFLOOR FOR HARDWOOD OR LAMINATE

You are now ready to install laminate or hardwood flooring in your room or home. Check out the step-by-step instructions for installing hardwood or laminate flooring at [Lowe's.com/Videos](https://www.lowes.com/Videos).

These "How-To's" are provided for informational purposes only. The information contained in Lowe's "How-To" videos is intended to provide general guidance to simplify jobs around the house. Because tools, products, materials, techniques, building codes and local regulations are continually changing, Lowe's assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information contained herein and disclaims any liability for omissions, errors or the outcome of any project. It is the responsibility of the viewer to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, rules, codes and regulations for a project. The viewer must always take proper safety precautions and exercise caution when taking on any project. If there is any question or doubt in regards to any element of a project, please consult with a licensed professional.