

Which type of flooring do I choose?

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Flooring materials are more varied than ever before, offering a combination of fashion and function. But all those attractive new options might leave you feeling a little confused about what best suits your needs. If you want to install new flooring but aren't sure what kind, keep reading to understand some of the practical and aesthetic factors that should influence your decision. Lowe's is happy to provide this information as a service to you.

Which Room Will It Be?

Each room in the house serves specific functions that require you to think about function as well as fashion.

Kitchens

- High traffic and dirt from the outside entry door.
- Spills are common from cooking, so floors must be easy to clean.
- Non-slip flooring is necessary for safety purposes.

Possible Solutions:

- Vinyl is a good choice for kitchen floors. In the event of a dropped glass or dish, a resilient floor like vinyl has more bounce and may prevent breakage. Remember, a deeply textured pattern may be harder to clean.
- Tile, laminate and wood are great kitchen floor alternatives. Rugs and mats can soften a harder material such as tile.

Bathroom

- Waterproof flooring is a must for those sink, toilet and bathtub overflows.
- Washable flooring is important for ease of cleaning.
- Non-slip flooring is necessary for safety purposes.

Possible Solutions:

- Vinyl has traditionally been the floor of choice for baths.
- Ceramic tile is gaining rapidly in popularity.
- Newer versions of laminate and wood products can be adapted to bathrooms even with excessive moisture. Make sure any rugs or mats are non-slip.



New flooring offers a combination of fashion and function.

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Living Room

- Focal point and centerpiece of home furnishings in most homes.
- Function varies from family room to formal receiving room.
- Choose flooring to match the room's function and décor.

Possible Solutions:

- Carpet offers fibers and styles that accommodate informal or formal use.
- Hardwood also provides an attractive, durable option, especially with the addition of area rugs.



Carpet is a great choice for a living room.

Dining Room

- Wear-resistant flooring is a must if the floor is used regularly at mealtime.
- Stain-resistant floors are necessary for any area prone to food spills.

Possible Solutions:

- Carpet is an option, but light colors tend to show stains more and may not be the best choice.
- Wood, laminate or tile work well in dining rooms.

Bedroom

- Floors are usually overshadowed by the bed and coordinating fabrics.
- Traffic is less of a problem here than in other rooms, so stains and wear should be minimal.
- Consider a neutral flooring that adapts to frequent décor changes. Too many bright colors can be overpowering.

Possible Solutions:

- Carpet is traditionally used in bedrooms.
- Wood or laminate floors are good alternatives, especially if you add decorative rugs.

Hallways and Stairs

- Steady traffic brings dirt and moisture, especially to entry halls and mudrooms.
- Stains and wear are more visible.
- Look for a sturdy material that coordinates with the rest of the flooring in the house.
- Entry halls are the first part of your home a guest sees, so use this area to make a bold statement.

Possible Solutions:

- Inlaid patterns of wood parquet or ceramic tile can be dramatic and still handle traffic.
- Laminate flooring is a good alternative, especially if you add non-slip decorative rugs.

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Which Room Will It Be?

Before you make your purchase, do a little research. Each type of flooring requires the proper substrate to work, therefore some floors are not recommended for all areas of the home.

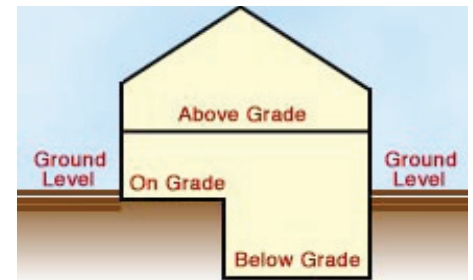
Is the existing floor above grade (suspended), on grade or below grade? (see diagram)

- Basements are especially susceptible to ground moisture. Both grade level and below grade level floors have potential moisture concerns that need to be addressed.
- Make sure that you buy a flooring material suited to the grade level where the floor is to be installed. A flooring sales specialist can tell you if the floor you like will work.

Before You Buy

Before buying flooring, take detailed measurements of the room and create a scale drawing, if possible. Take these with you when you go shopping. Your flooring specialist will use this information to provide you with the most attractive and economical installation solution. Got your room measurements already? Let us do the math—use our [Flooring Calculator](#).

- Will the new floor have continuity with the other flooring in your home? Where does the floor fit in your overall decorating theme?
- Will you have to redecorate the whole room to match the new floor? What colors match the existing room décor? Color is a major consideration in floor selection.
 - Light surfaces reflect a great deal of light while darker surfaces reflect little light, requiring more light sources.
 - A room furnished in a light color scheme feels larger than darker rooms. Dark-colored flooring can make a large room feel more intimate.
 - Stick with neutral shades to allow more colorful home decorating or choose bold colors for impact. Keep in mind that a light floor shows more soil than a darker floor.
- Where is the room? Does it have an outside entrance that generates traffic? Will pets or children be running or playing on it?
- Does anyone in your home have allergies? Because they harbor fewer dust mites, hard-surfaced floors, complemented with easy-to-clean rugs, are a better choice for people with allergies than wall-to-wall carpeting.
- Do you have a heated floor? Not all floor coverings are adaptable to subfloor heating.
- What's the cost of the new floor, and how long will the floor last? Compare how long different types of flooring usually last. For example, if you are trying to decide between hardwood and laminate, remember that hardwood can be refinished but laminate cannot. Plus, when you've made the decision on what type of flooring you want, remember it will cost just the same to have a middle-grade carpet installed as it would to have the best quality carpet installed.
- What care will be involved in maintaining the floor? Will it be easy to keep clean?



Grade diagram.

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- Can the old floor be refinished? Some existing hardwood floors can be refinished. If you like the look of wood, explore this option.
- Can you install it yourself? Are you able to recognize and repair inadequate subflooring and underlayment? What is the amount of preparation required? Are you able to remove and dispose of old flooring materials? Remember that some old resilient floors contain asbestos and require removal by a professional. If you decide not to install it yourself, remember, Lowe's can have it installed for you.
- What care will be involved in maintaining the floor? Will it be easy to keep clean?

Installing Floor Tile

Skill Level: Advanced

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Ceramic tile is a durable and attractive material for floors. Easily maintained, it may be just the look you want for your bathroom or kitchen. Installation requires preparation and some patience. Lowe's is happy to provide this information as a service to you.

You will need tools specific to laying ceramic tile. Be sure to review the tools and materials list and have everything on hand before beginning the project. If your project involves tiling both walls and the floor, do the walls first.

These basic principles apply whether you have chosen ceramic, slate, marble or granite tiles. After you have finished estimating and purchasing your tile, materials and tools you are ready to begin.

Tools & Materials

Tools

- Level
- Goggles
- Glass cutter
- Carpenter's square
- Sponge
- Clean rags
- Grout float (rubber)
- Pencil
- Tape measure
- Hammer
- Notched trowel or spreader

Materials

- Tile (field and trim)
- Tile spacers (if needed)
- Spackling compound
- Tile adhesive
- Silicone caulk
- Silicone grout sealer

Tiling a Floor

Use only floor tiles when tiling a floor. There is a difference. Floor and wall tiles may look similar, but floor tiles are generally thicker and are textured to make them safer to walk on. Larger floor tiles will not safely adhere to walls.

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Preparing Floors for Tile

The original flooring material should be removed before you install your new tile since the new tile installation is only as good as the underlying floor.

- The subfloor must be sound enough to support tile. Tile can be heavy and must be installed on a flat, rigid surface. Subfloors under tile should be no less than 1" thick. A flexing floor will cause cracks to show up in the grout later and may cause tiles to break.
- If your floor "bounces" when you walk over it, try adding rigidity by renailling the subfloor to the floor joists. Add bridging between the joists, and/or shim the subfloor with wooden shims driven between the top edge of the joists and the bottom face of the subfloor.
- Uneven or damaged floors are best covered first with an underlayment as the tile base. Cement-fiber board is often recommended by tile manufacturers for use on floors in a moist environment.
- If the floor is concrete, repair any holes or cracks. You can sometimes lower high spots using a coarse-grit abrasive on a belt or disc sander. Any minor bumps can be removed with a cold chisel driven by a baby sledge hammer. (Be sure to wear safety glasses.)

SAFETY NOTE: Never sand or abrade a vinyl floor — older floors may contain asbestos. It is recommended that you have older flooring materials tested before removal, and that materials containing asbestos be removed by a professional.

- If you have linoleum flooring, you can place underlayment over the top of it.
 1. Remove all trim and clean the floor thoroughly. The surface on which you are installing tile must be smooth and free from debris, grease or wax.
 2. Pull out any nails in the trim from the back side. This step keeps the trim from splitting so you can use it again.
 3. For areas subjected to moisture, the underlayment should be sealed with a waterproof membrane or other moisture-resistant product. Cement-fiber board makes an ideal underlayment for tile in wet locations. These boards are often referred to as "cement board". The product is composed of cement and fiber for strength and moisture resistance. It is available in 1/4" and 1/2" thicknesses depending on the application.

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Installing Floor Tile

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What Kind of Pattern Do I Use?

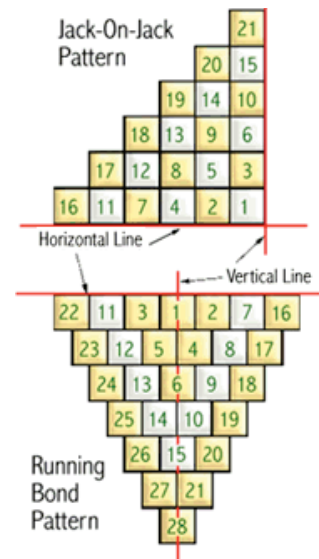
The pattern options available when laying tile are virtually endless. However, there are two basic patterns:

A “jack-on-jack” pattern is the most common. The pattern consists of tile laid like squares on a checkerboard.

A “running bond” pattern has offset grout lines for each row.

Either is fairly easy to set, although the running bond pattern is the more difficult of the two.

If you are artistic and doing a project such as a table or countertop, you may want to create a mosaic of small tiles. Applied with artistic skill, tile mosaics can be stunning.

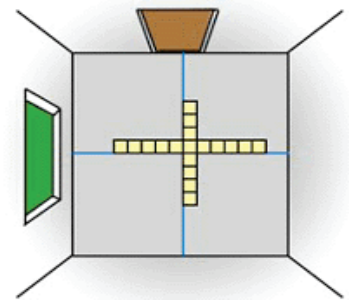


Two examples of tile patterns

Layout of the Floor Area

Floor tiles should be centered in the room for the best visual appearance. Keep this in mind when you lay out the floor tile.

1. Turn off the cold water to the sink at the shutoff valve. Disconnect the supply line from the cold water tailpiece on the faucet and drain the water into a bucket.
2. Install the adapters into the inlet and outlet on the filter. Attach the old supply line to the filter's inlet valve. Attach the outlet valve to the cold water tailpiece using the couplings and tubing provided with the filter.
3. Secure the filter to the back of the cabinet with the mount and hardware in the kit. Turn the water back on at the shutoff valve and check for leaks.



Find the center of two opposite walls and lay tile along the chalk lines.

Installing Tile on a Floor

1. Begin laying the tile from the center of the floor where your two final reference lines cross. Start by laying a tile at the intersection of the lines, then use the lines as a guide as you work your way outward toward the walls in each quadrant.
2. Spread the adhesive with the trowel's notched edge, combing it out in beaded ridges. Spaces between ridges of adhesive should be almost bare.

Good idea: Some ceramic tiles have spacers built into the tile itself. If you desire a wider grout line, use spacers as well.



Spread the adhesive with the trowel's notched edge.

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3. If you wish, you may insert plastic spacers between the tiles to help maintain straight grout lines if the tiles do not have spacer lugs. Remove these after placing the tile but before they become firmly set in the adhesive.
2. Spread the adhesive with the trowel's notched edge, combing it out in beaded ridges. Spaces between ridges of adhesive should be almost bare.

SAFETY NOTE : Some adhesives emit toxic and flammable fumes. Provide good ventilation, especially in confined locations such as shower stalls. Always refer to the product label for safety precautions.

Exercise caution when using tile-cutting tools.

4. If adhesive oozes up between the tiles, clean out the excess before it dries. Immediately wipe any adhesive from the face of the tiles with a solvent-soaked sponge or rag. (Consult the manufacturer's instructions to determine the appropriate solvent). Adhesives begin to set firmly in 20 to 30 minutes.
5. After you have installed several rows of tile, set them into the adhesive with the tile leveler and a mallet.
6. After laying all the whole tiles that will fit, begin cutting and adhering tiles to fill around the perimeter of the room.

Cutting and Fitting Ceramic Tile

Nearly every tiling job requires trimming tiles to fit around borders or obstructions such as window frames, electrical fixtures, pipes, basins, toilets or countertops. Straight cuts are relatively simple. Shaping tiles to fit curves is more difficult and requires practice and patience.

For small jobs, use a glass cutter or a simple tile cutter. Larger projects may warrant using a wet saw. Do-it-yourself wet saw models are relatively inexpensive (in relation to renting). They make clean cuts with little waste.

Apply even pressure when using tools designed to score, cut and drill tiles. Pressing too hard can cause tiles to crack and break. Drilling tile requires a special bit.

To make cuts at a true right angle, use a combination square as your straightedge when scoring with a glass cutter.

When using a glass cutter or tile cutter, score the tile in one stroke to achieve smooth and even breaks. Repeated scoring will cause the tile to chip or crack.

Always wear safety glasses when working with tiles.



Find the center of two opposite walls and lay tile along the chalk lines.

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Snapping tile by hand

1. With the scored line facing up, position the tile over a nail or a stiff piece of wire.
2. Place your fingers flat on either side of the tile and apply firm, even pressure until the tile snaps.

Using tile nippers

1. With the scored line facing up, position the tile over a nail or a stiff piece of wire.
2. Place your fingers flat on either side of the tile and apply firm, even pressure until the tile snaps.

Using a tile cutter

1. Measure and mark the cutting line on the tile.
2. Align this mark with the cutting guide on the tile cutter.
3. Supporting the tile to keep it level, lower the cutting wheel onto the edge of the tile. Push it away from you with firm pressure.
4. When you've rolled the cutting wheel to the far end, push down on the handle to split the tile.

Using a wet saw

1. Measure and mark the cutting line on the tile.
2. Align this mark with the cutting guide on the tile cutter.
3. Supporting the tile to keep it level, lower the cutting wheel onto the edge of the tile. Push it away from you with firm pressure.
4. Supporting the tile to keep it level, move it towards the blade. Move the tile slowly to avoid overheating and cracking. Let the saw do the work.

Cutting Holes in Tiles

1. Mark the shape to be cut with a pencil.
2. Drill a hole inside the shape with light pressure, using a 1/2" carbide masonry drill bit.
3. Insert tungsten carbide rod blade through the hole and attach the ends of the rod to a hacksaw frame.
4. Saw along the pencil line with even pressure. Let the saw do the work. Forcing the cut too rapidly can break the tile.

Cutting Holes in Tiles

1. Using a pencil, draw the shape that needs to be removed on the tile. A compass may help you draw neater curves.
2. Score the outline of the shape you drew with the glass cutter. Then score several crisscross lines within the outlined area.
3. Using tile nippers (or pliers), begin taking tiny bites from the area to be removed. The idea is to "nibble" off chips, not chunks.

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4. An alternate method is to make several parallel cuts with a wet saw. The adjacent cuts will create several small strips of waste tile. snap these off with tile nippers and smooth the surface.

Fitting Around Obstructions

1. Using a pencil, draw the shape that needs to be removed on the tile. A compass may help you draw neater curves.
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3. Using tile nippers (or pliers), begin taking tiny bites from the area to be removed. The idea is to “nibble” off chips, not chunks.
4. An alternate method is to make several parallel cuts with a wet saw. The adjacent cuts will create several small strips of waste tile. snap these off with tile nippers and smooth the surface.

Smoothing Rough and Jagged Breaks

Jagged edges — Use tile nippers or pliers to nibble off the uneven edge of a broken tile.

Rough edges — Use a round file to smooth rough edges of areas that have been nibbled away.

Cut edges — If a straight-cut edge shows, rub it against a sheet of 80-grit aluminum oxide sandpaper to round and smooth the edge.

Grouting the Joints

1. Mix grout to the consistency of a thick paste (like peanut butter) and apply it by forcing the grout between tiles with a rubber float held at a 45 degree angle.
2. Hold the float almost perpendicular to the floor. Wipe away excess grout from the surface of the tiles. Take care to pack all joints. Use a toothbrush to shape the grout.
3. After 20 minutes, wipe away all excess grout with a damp sponge. Keep your sponge clean by rinsing it often. Follow the grout manufacturer's instructions for curing and cleaning the grout.
4. Fill seams with a bead of flexible water-soluble silicone caulking where tiles meet the counter. Smooth with a sponge or your finger. (Wearing a thin latex glove would be a good idea if you are using your finger.)
5. After the grout has cured for a week, silicone grout sealer may be applied with a small paintbrush to help prevent grout discoloration.

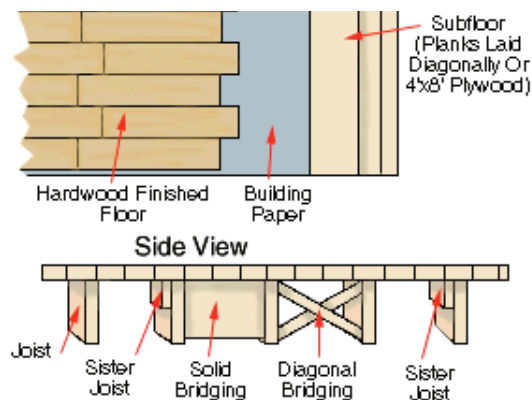
Installing Wood Flooring

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Looking for a simple way to make your home warmer and more inviting? Try easy-to-install parquet or engineered wood flooring. Easier to maintain and more durable than carpeting, wood flooring may be the answer to a lifetime of flooring concerns. You can lay the floor yourself with patience and some basic tools. Lowe's is happy to provide this information as a service to you.

Anatomy of a Floor



How to Lay a Floating Wood Floor

Floating floors are special tongue-and-groove boards that lie on thin sheets of foam or cork underlayment. They are glued only at their edges and ends.

Keep in mind that wood is organic, so expansion and contraction will occur depending on the level of moisture in the air. Before you install your new wood floor, allow the boards to sit inside your home for at least three days to acclimate to the conditions.

Tools & Materials

Tools

- Circular saw
- Sandpaper
- Yard broom
- Utility knife
- Pry bar
- Vacuum cleaner
- Caulking gun
- Putty knife
- Drill/driver
- Long-handled floor scraper
- Tape measure
- Hammer
- Pencil
- Damp sponge
- Floorboards and mouldings
- Underlayment
- Vapor barrier
- 1/2-inch wood spacers
- Leveling compound

Installing Wood Flooring

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Preparing the Floor

1. Cut up the old floor in manageable pieces and remove it by peeling back with a long-handled scraper.
2. Remove all pieces of the old flooring and vacuum thoroughly.
3. Fill in the low spots. You can check for low spots by placing a floorboard on the floor on its edge.
4. Unroll the underlayment, starting along a wall. Cut it to fit with a utility knife.
5. Mark guidelines on the underlayment for proper alignment of your floorboards.

Installing Flooring in Doorways

1. Using a panel saw, cut the door moulding at the bottom so the new floor will fit underneath. Use a piece of flooring to judge the size cut you need to make.
2. Remove the cut moulding with a utility knife. Slide the new flooring underneath the notched door moulding up against the wall.

Laying the Floorboards

1. Fit the first board into a corner. Use a wood spacer to leave an expansion gap between the flooring and the wall.
2. Slide a second floorboard into the end of the first one. The tongue-and-groove should fit.
3. Firmly press the boards together and insert a spacer near the joint.
4. Before installing the next board, apply adhesive to the edges, but do not get the glue in the actual groove. Some floors require adhesive on the ends as well as the edges. Check with the manufacturer.

Tip: Use an aliphatic resin glue. It is white and dries in about an hour, completely curing in 24 hours. Wipe any excess or spills with a damp sponge.

5. Position the board and press into place. Secure it by tapping with a hammer. Use a scrap piece of wood between the hammer and the new flooring to protect it.
6. Proceed with the next boards until the last one. You might need to rip saw the last row so it will fit.
7. Using a pry bar (and a piece of scrap wood to protect the wall), slowly lower and ease the last board into place.

How to Lay a Parquet Floor

Most parquet floors are made from hardwoods such as oak, cherry, mahogany, beech and pecan. For best results, make a dry run of the pattern you want to lay out by laying a test arrangement before permanent installation.

Even experts make mistakes when installing parquet flooring, so buy about 5 percent more flooring than you calculate that you will need or the project. If you do not need the extra material right away, it will come in handy later in case damage occurs.

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Some rooms are not perfectly straight or square. When you begin laying your parquet floor, start at the center of the room and work outwards toward the walls. This establishes a well-aligned pattern throughout most of the room. If the room is irregular, only the edges of the finished floor will be — that is the area where it will be least noticeable.

Tools & Materials

Tools

- Mallet
- Hammer
- Combination square
- Jig saw
- Pencil
- Tape measure
- Chalk line
- Putty knife
- Notched trowel
- Asphalt building paper (for concrete subfloor) or plywood underlayment
- Parquet tiles
- Mastic adhesive
- Mastic solvent
- Scrap plywood

Preparing to Lay the Tiles

1. After removing the toestrips from the wall, inspect the subfloor. If it is not in good condition, replace it. The parquet floor will not turn out right if the subfloor is not in tip-top condition.
2. Find the center of the room by measuring from wall to wall.
3. Snap a chalk line between the center of opposite walls. Snap another chalk line between the other two walls, intersecting the first chalk line. This is your center point.
4. Using a carpenter's square, make sure the two intersecting lines form right angles.

Tip: Use an aliphatic resin glue. It is white and dries in about an hour, completely curing in 24 hours. Wipe any excess or spills with a damp sponge.

5. Lay a test run of parquet along the chalk lines starting at the center, working toward the wall. Make sure they look straight, but do not glue them in place yet.
6. At the intersection of the chalk lines, spread mastic on a 2' x 2' area and let it dry.
7. Using a pry bar (and a piece of scrap wood to protect the wall), slowly lower and ease the last board into place.



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Laying the Tiles

1. Lay down a tile on the mastic using the lines for placement. Press in place firmly.
2. Tap the tile into place by putting a piece of scrap wood on top of it and striking the scrap wood with a mallet. Do not let the tile slip out of place when securing it.
3. Fill in one quadrant of the floor working toward each wall.
4. After tapping the tiles to secure them, clean up any mastic that seeps between the tiles using a cloth moistened with a solvent recommended by the manufacturer.
5. The last tiles against the walls will need to be cut to fit. Do this with a jigsaw. Cut them slightly smaller than the measurement indicates. This will allow for the effects of heat and humidity.
6. Let the mastic dry for at least a day. (Check with the manufacturer for any special instructions.) Then replace the toestrips.

How to Repair a Wood Floor

As sturdy as wood floors are, they still sometimes squeak, sag, or become damaged. Humidity and heat cause the boards to swell and shrink. This, in turn, makes the boards rub against nails or each other, hence, the squeaks.

To replace damaged boards, take an old one with you to match the color and grain. Winter is the best time to repair wood floors because the boards are not swollen. Replacement boards should not fit very tightly, because when warmer weather comes, they may swell and pop out of place.

If the floor is sagging, do not expect to fix it overnight. It took a long time for the sag to occur and if you try to hastily correct the problem, you could cause structural damage to your home.

Tools & Materials

Tools

- Circular saw
- Tape measure
- Pry bar
- Drill/driver
- Drill bits
- Nail set
- Screwdriver
- Chisel
- Tape measure
- Hammer
- Combination square
- Level
- Adjustable support jack

Materials

- Ring-shank flooring nails
- Wood putty or wood filler stick
- Screws
- Wood glue
- Wood plugs

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- Spray silicone
- Powdered graphite or talc
- Triangular glazier's points
- Wood shims
- Concrete
- String
- 2x4s; 4x6 beam; wood block

Silencing Squeaks From Above

1. Mark the location of the joists on the flooring if you can..
2. Drill pilot holes at 45 degree angles toward each other at the joists to prevent the wood from splitting.
3. Drive 8d ring-shank flooring nails into the holes you made. Countersink the nails with a nail set and fill with wood putty.

Floorboards That Rub

Use a screwdriver to press triangular glazier's points coated with powdered graphite or talc between the floor boards where they join. Set them below the surface.

Securing Warped or Curled Floorboards

1. Mark the location of the joist on the finish floor and drill pilot holes through it. Counterbore holes about 1/3 the depth of your finish floor.
2. Drive a screw and washer through the finish floor into the subflooring. This will pull the two floor layers together.
3. Put some wood glue on a 1/2" wood plug and hammer it into place on top of the screw.
4. Sand it down level with the finish floor and stain to match.

Replacing Damaged Boards

1. Use a circular saw to cut 3/4" deep down the middle of the entire length of the damaged board. Do not cut the adjacent boards.
2. Remove the damaged two halves with a pry bar. Remove the nails.
3. Measure and cut another board to replace the damaged one. Be very careful when cutting the ends. They need to be perfectly square.
4. The replacement board will have a groove on the side. Take off the bottom flange of this groove with a hammer and chisel, or circular saw. Be very careful if you are using the saw.
5. Put some glue on the edges of the new board, the edges of the flooring it will rest against, and the subfloor.
6. Put the replacement board in place and secure it by hammering it down. Use a scrap piece of wood between the floor and the hammer to protect the finish.
7. Stain the new board to match the old. Secure it with 8d flooring nails. Drill pilot holes first so the floor will not split, then set the nail heads.
8. Fill the holes with wood putty.