

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

- Laminate Flooring
- Underlayment—if required
- Moisture/ Vapor Barrier—if required
- Jig Saw
- Circular Saw
- Miter Saw—optional
- Table Saw—optional; for cutting lengthwise
- Safety Glasses
- Dust Mask
- Flooring Spacers
- Weight, Carton of Flooring or Toolbox—to hold the rows in place
- Tapping Block
- Dead Blow Hammer
- Pull Bar
- Tape Measure
- Pencil
- Utility Knife
- Level
- Wood Glue
- Silicone Sealant—if required
- Transitions and Mouldings
- Hammer
- Finish Nails
- Nail Set
- Wood Filler
- Knee Pads

Laminate floors have the same great look as hardwood floors and the installation is easy. The following step-by-step instructions will show you how to install a floating (without adhesive, nails or staples) laminate floor.

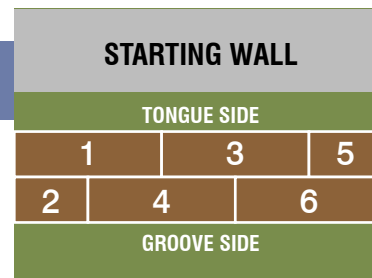
PREPARATION

- 01 Interlocking laminate floating floors can be installed over clean and level ceramic, vinyl, concrete, or plywood/OSB subflooring.**
 - Typically, laminate flooring cannot be installed in rooms with a floor drain.
- 02 Read the manufacturer's instructions before the installation.**
- 03 If required by the manufacturer, install an underlayment, or moisture barrier, making sure that the top surface side is installed as recommended.**
 - Many laminate floors have the underlayment pre-attached to the underside.
- 04 Refer to the videos and instruction sheets on how to prepare a wood or concrete subfloor at [Lowe's.com/Videos](https://www.lowes.com/Videos). They will show you how to level your floor and establish an installation guideline.**
- 05 Place the flooring materials in the installation room for at least 72 hours prior to installing them so they can acclimate to the temperature and humidity ranges recommended by the manufacturer.**

INSTALLING THE FIRST ROWS

- **WARNING:** Wear safety glasses when cutting the laminate pieces.
- **TIP:** For comfort and safety, use knee pads, a soft pad or towel under your knees when installing flooring.

■ **When installing the flooring, assemble the pieces in the order shown in the diagram.**



01 Loosely lay the first row with the tongue of the boards facing the starting wall.

02 To prep the planks in Row One, cut the tongue off the long side of all of the pieces.

- Using a table saw makes the tongue removal easy. Just set the fence at the appropriate width and cut the boards.

IMPORTANT

Before you begin this project, read the manufacturer's instructions. And follow all local building codes. If you're not comfortable installing a laminate floor, discuss the job with a Lowe's associate. Lowe's installs many types of floors.

INSTALLING THE FIRST ROWS (cont.)

03 Place spacers between the laminate planks and adjacent walls for the manufacturer's recommended expansion gap.

- Most manufacturers call for an expansion gap of ¼" or the width of the flooring product.

04 Begin piecing the first few rows of laminate boards about 2' away from the starting wall. Work from left to right.

- Assembling the first few rows away from the starting wall gives you extra room to work. Once the first few rows have been assembled, you can carefully slide the flooring into its final position.



05 Cut the first piece of Row Two, following the manufacturer's instructions for staggering the joints between rows.

- Typically, at least a 12" stagger is recommended.
- Staggering the seams at each row strengthens the floor and enhances its appearance by giving it a more random pattern.
- To cut the flooring, lay the board on its face (bottom up) and cut with a saw equipped with a fine-tooth blade for flooring.



06 Insert the tongue of the long side of Row Two into the groove of the first plank of Row One.

- You may have to use a slight angle to set the tongue in the groove. Just press the board down until it locks in place.



07 Attach the next piece of Row One.

- Once again, insert the tongue at a slight angle into the groove and press down to lock it.
- Make sure the planks are aligned and the surface is even at the joints.

08 Add the next piece of Row Two.

- Insert the tongue into the long side of Row One, slide the piece toward the end joint, then press down to lock the joint.
- This locking method should be used for the rest of the installation.

09 After you've installed the first two planks of each row, place a weight, like a toolbox or a carton of flooring, on top of the first planks to hold each row in place.

10 Continue installing the first two rows, locking a plank for Row One, then a plank for Row Two. Use this pattern to finish the rows.

- Trim the last piece to allow for spacers and the expansion gap if required.

INSTALLING THE FIRST ROWS (cont.)

11 A tapping block may be needed when a plank can't be rotated, such as under a doorframe.

- Position the board as close as possible to its finished location under the doorframe.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for using the tapping block. Typically, you position it along the groove side of the plank, then use a dead blow hammer to tap the plank into place, locking the joint.



12 Once the first two rows are assembled, slide them into position against the starting wall.

- Be sure to maintain the manufacturer's recommended expansion gap with flooring spacers.

INSTALLING THE REST OF THE FLOOR

01 Continue installing the laminate flooring, staggering the joints at least 12" and maintaining the expansion gap.

- TIP: Use cut pieces to start rows, making sure the joints are staggered properly.

02 When laying the flooring around obstructions, like floor vents, cabinets or columns, cut the flooring to fit with a jig saw.

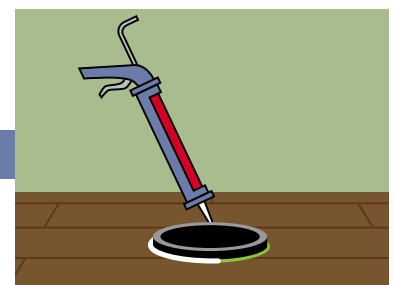
- To install the flooring around pipes, you may need to use a jig saw and wood glue to make the planks fit properly.
 1. Cut a notch in the flooring to fit around the pipe.
 2. With the smaller excess piece, cut it to fit on the other side of the pipe.
 3. Set the smaller piece in place and attach it to the larger plank with wood glue along the cut line(s).



03 Check the manufacturer's instructions for applying silicone sealant in areas with high moisture levels, such as a bathroom or kitchen. Excess moisture under the planks can damage the flooring.

- When installing around a bathtub or sink, apply silicone sealant to create a watertight seal.
- You'll need to take some special steps when installing around a toilet.
 1. Remove the toilet.
 2. Cut the flooring to fit around the drain. Remember to account for the manufacturer's required expansion gap.
 3. Install the flooring.
 4. Apply silicone sealant in the expansion gap.
 5. Allow sealant to dry, then reinstall the toilet.

- Also check the manufacturer's instructions for applying sealant along kitchen cabinets that house a dishwasher or refrigerator.



INSTALLING THE REST OF THE FLOOR (cont.)

04 For the last row, you may have to cut the pieces to fit.

- Measure the width needed for the last row and subtract the manufacturer's expansion gap.
- Measure to the board surfaces (excluding the tongue) and rip (cut lengthwise) the last boards along the groove edge.
- Some flooring products have a small plastic tongue in the short side groove of the planks which helps lock the pieces together. Be sure to remove the plastic tongue before cutting the length of the board.



05 Use a pull bar and hammer to lock the last row in place.

FINISHING UP

01 Install transition strips at entries and where the floor meets other types of flooring, following manufacturer's instructions.

02 Remove the wall spacers once the transitions are in place.

03 If you installed a separate underlayment, cut the excess.

04 When installing in a bathroom, kitchen, laundry room or along an exterior door, apply silicone sealant in the expansion space around the perimeter of the floor. This should be done once the entire floor is in place.

05 Install the baseboards and shoe moulding to the walls as needed.

- Attach the trim and shoe moulding to the walls. Do not attach them to the flooring.

06 Keep 1-2 cartons of your laminate flooring so you can fix any potential problems in the future, like a damaged board.



Now you can enjoy your beautiful and durable laminate floor for many years.

For other flooring installations, as well as other home improvement projects, visit [Lowe's.com/Videos](https://www.lowes.com/Videos).

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