

Skill Level: ADVANCED Try these projects after you have a collection of DIY successes under your belt, and make sure you're ready for a challenge. You'll need experience with a wide variety of specialized tools, and it may take several days to finish. If you've built a deck or installed an irrigation system, these projects probably match your abilities.

✓ MATERIALS

- ¾" Thick Solid Hardwood Floor Planks
- Transitions and Mouldings
- Moisture Test Kit
- Underlayment and Moisture/Vapor Barrier—as required by manufacturer
- Wood Putty
- Pneumatic Flooring Nailer—rent one, if possible
- Drill with Drill Bits
- Hammer
- Nail Set
- Circular Saw or Miter Saw
- Table Saw—optional; for cutting lengthwise
- Pry Bar
- Spacers
- Pencil
- Tape Measure
- Dead Blow Hammer
- Nylon Tapping Block
- Utility Knife
- Finish Nails
- Wood Glue
- Safety Glasses
- Dust Mask
- Knee Pads

Hardwood flooring adds warmth and beauty to any room, and is 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. ¾" thick solid hardwood floors can only be installed over a wood subfloor, at or above ground level. These instructions will show you how to install a ¾" thick solid hardwood floor over a plywood subfloor.

Remember that a good flooring installation starts with a correctly prepared subfloor. So be sure to watch the plywood subfloor prep video 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 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.**
- 02 Check the moisture level of the subfloor to make sure the floor is within the manufacturer's recommendations. If your moisture level is not within the manufacturer's recommendations, stop the installation and call a Lowe's associate for help.**
- 03 Once you have prepped the subfloor, carefully sweep and vacuum the surface on which the flooring will be installed.**
- 04 Check the planks for warping and defects, which typically affect around 5% of the product. These boards are unusable and should be discarded. If you experience more than 5% defects, stop the installation and call a Lowe's associate for help.**

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.)

05 Once your subfloor has met the moisture requirements, install a moisture barrier and underlayment, such as builder's felt or rosin paper, as required by the manufacturer.

- Install the moisture barrier and underlayment based on the manufacturer's guidelines, typically by rolling out the underlayment in the same direction that the wood is being installed. Extend the underlayment a few inches up the wall (will be trimmed later).
- A Lowe's associate can tell you what type of moisture barrier and underlayment will work best for your materials, at least 2-in-1 underlayment is required.

INSTALLING THE FIRST ROWS

01 Put on your safety glasses.

02 Place spacers between the flooring and the wall for the expansion gap.

- Be sure to check the manufacturer's recommendations for the appropriate expansion gap.

03 Using the straightest boards, lay the first row of flooring along the guideline, with the tongue side facing the room.

- This will serve as a guide for the rest of the room or house.
- Use the dead blow hammer and gently tap the tapping block against the flooring to ensure a tight fit.
- It is important to use a tapping block so you do not damage the tongue and groove system.

04 Face nail the first row of boards in place with a hammer and nail set.

- Pre-drill the nail holes every 6" starting 1-3" from the ends of the planks and 1/2" from the groove.
- Hammer nails into the pre-drilled holes and use the nail set to countersink the nails.
- Come back later and fill the holes with putty that matches the color of your floor.



05 For the second row, fit the groove on the tongue of the first row.

- Use the dead blow hammer and gently tap the tapping block against the flooring to ensure a tight fit.

06 Place the second row so that the ends are at least 6" apart in each row.

- This will help strengthen the floor.
- This will also give the floor a staggered look, so you may need to cut the first plank.
- To cut the flooring, lay the plank on its face and cut with a circular saw.
 - Make sure you're using the correct blade to cut flooring.
 - Make sure you allow for the appropriate expansion gap.
- Face nail the second row like you did the first row.



INSTALLING THE FIRST ROW (cont.)

07 Repeat the process until you can use the pneumatic nail gun.

- This is typically between 2 and 4 rows.

INSTALLING THE REST OF THE FLOOR

01 When installing the rest of the floor, mix planks of different colors and grain to give the floor a more random pattern.

- You will need to work out of multiple cartons at a time.
- **TIP:** Dry fit a few rows together before you install them to see how they look and speed up the installation.

02 Install the rest of the floor by blind nailing the planks.

- Follow the pneumatic nailer manufacturer's instructions for blind nailing. Typically you hold the pneumatic nailer against the tongue of the plank and hit it with a hammer.
- Make sure the nailer has a protective boot to prevent damaging the floor.
- Check the manufacturer's PSI recommendations for the pneumatic nailer.
- Nails should be spaced 1-3" from the ends and every 6-8" along the tongue side of the plank.



03 Continue laying the floor across the room, staggering the ends at least 6" apart.

- Maintain the expansion gap around the perimeter of the floor.

04 If you have entry areas or columns, cut the planks to fit.

05 When you get to the last few rows where the pneumatic nailer won't fit, face nail the boards as you did when beginning the floor.

06 For the last row, you might have to cut the pieces to fit.

- Measure the distance to the wall from the last laid row. Do not measure from the tongue.
- Subtract the manufacturer's expansion gap and cut the last row.
- To fit the last row, place a piece of scrap wood against the finish wall and fit the boards together gently using a pry bar.
- Then face nail the last row like you did the first row. If the width of the last row is less than 1", glue it to the previous row by placing glue on the tongue.



FINISHING UP

- 01** Once the last row is attached, install the transition pieces according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- 02** When your transitions are in place, remove the spacers, trim the underlayment and install the baseboards and shoe moulding.
 - Attach the trim and shoe moulding to the walls, not the floor.
- 03** Keep 1-2 cartons of your hardwood flooring so you can fix any potential problems in the future, like a damaged board.

You can now enjoy your new hardwood floor, its warmth, beauty and ease of cleaning, for decades to come.



For other flooring installations, and other home improvement projects, visit [Lowes.com/Videos](https://www.lowes.com/Videos).

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