

PREP A CONCRETE 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

- Hammer
- Pry Bar
- Concrete Grinder—you may want to rent one
- Long Level
- Tape Measure
- Cementitious Leveling Compound
- Trowel
- Bucket
- Back Saw—to cut door casing
- Circular Saw
- Moisture Test Kit for Concrete
- Underlayment and Moisture/Vapor Barrier—as required by manufacturer
- Pencil
- Chalk Line with Chalk
- Safety Glasses
- Dust Mask
- Work Gloves
- 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. If you are installing flooring with adhesive, clean the subfloor or old flooring of wax, paint, oil, sealers, adhesives and other debris following the adhesive manufacturer's instructions.
 - The surface can't be slick, heavily troweled or burnished either.
 - As needed, use a concrete grinder (typically rented) to remove any coating and to slightly roughen the concrete surface so the adhesive will stick.
2. If you are installing a locking or floating floor not attached to the subfloor, just make sure that the subfloor is clean.



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 any high spots with a concrete grinder.
3. Fill any low spots with a cementitious leveling compound following the manufacturer's directions and allow to dry before proceeding.

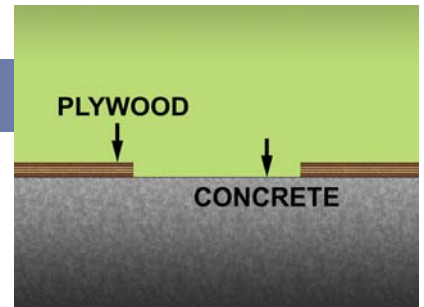


SUBFLOOR REQUIREMENTS:

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. The concrete subfloor must be sufficiently strong to safely support the flooring, furniture, and people in the room.
 - Check for cracks and crumbling.
 - If you're not sure about the integrity of your concrete subfloor, call a Lowe's associate for help.

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 and laminate floors require a moisture barrier like 2-in-1 underlayment).
- No underlayment is required for glue-down floors.
- 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.

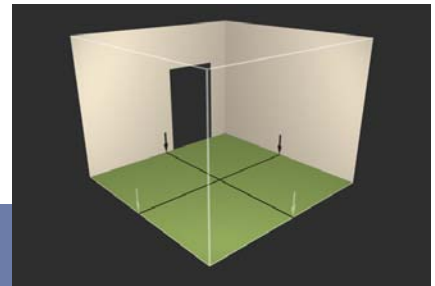
ESTABLISHING A GUIDELINE

- 01** For a concrete subfloor, you should install the plank with the sight lines of the floor.

- Typical sight lines run parallel to the longest wall, but each home is different.

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

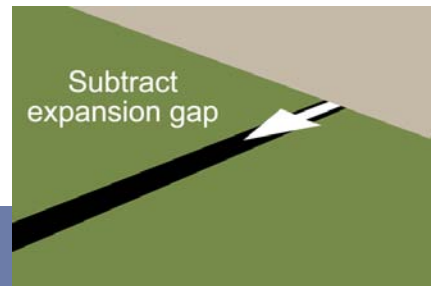
- 03** Snap the chalk line overtop the concrete or moisture barrier between the marks on opposite walls making a cross in the center of the room.



- 04** Determine your starting wall.

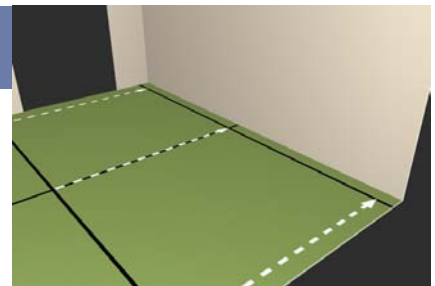
- You will lay the flooring lengthwise to this wall.
- When possible, always begin layout or installation from the straightest wall, generally an outside wall.

- 05** Measure from the center cross to the starting wall, subtract the manufacturer's expansion gap, and mark on the concrete or moisture barrier 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 CONCRETE 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).

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