

FITTING GUIDE

If you have purchased a hardwood floor, you may wish to lay it yourself. The purpose of this guide is to assist anyone who is laying a floor perhaps for the first time, and will help avoid making the common mistakes.

This guide applies to "floating" type floors only - that is to say those types of floors which are not fixed directly to the existing floor but instead are laid onto an underlay.

Please spend some time to read these pages, and if you do lay your own floor, try to complete the tasks in the order set out below. The key to a successful job is in the preparation and in the finishing.

- * Step 1) Remove Existing Floorcovering, Check Existing Floor Condition
- * Step 2) Improve the flatness of the floor
- * Step 3) Mark, Remove and Cut Doors
- * Step 4) Undercut door frames (Ensure that all necessary smoothing is complete and doors are removed)
- * Step 5) Laying The Flooring
- * Step 6) Fit Beading and Thresholds

Step 1) Remove Existing Floorcovering, Check Existing Floor Condition

Wherever possible, always clear all furniture from the room that you are working in. Remove existing floorcovering and inspect existing floor.

If existing floor is boards >> Ensure boards are well fixed down. Loose boards are usually the result of previous workmen - i.e. plumbers or electricians - not replacing boards properly. With this in mind, when refixing boards take care to avoid damaging cabling and pipework.

Once floorboards are fixed, we would always recommend fitting 4mm plywood (or at least 3mm hardboard) over the floor area. When fixing ply, use 19mm annular ring shanks. These nails really grip into the floorboard underneath and their flat head holds the ply firmly down.

Fix nails no more than 200mm apart. Do not use any nails longer than 19mm as they could fix through the floor boards and pierce pipes or cables. The purpose of fitting the 4mm plywood is two-fold. Firstly it helps to create a flatter base for the new flooring. Secondly it gives a good surface on which to lay a self levelling solution if required (see next step).

Only fit new floor straight over floorboards (i.e. without ply) if you are certain that the existing floorboards are flat and that further 'smoothing' will not be required.

If existing floor is concrete >>New concrete floors must be dry before the flooring can be laid. Most manufacturers have a rule of thumb that on average, concrete screeds will take 1 month to dry per inch of screed.

Therefore, a newly laid concrete screed 6 inches thick will theoretically take 6 months to dry! In our experience, floors do dry out quicker than this, but never lay on any floor that is evidently not dry. For all other floor types, i.e. chipboard or plywood, go on to next step

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Step 2) Improve the flatness of the floor

The singular most important aspect of laying any floating floor is ensuring that the existing floor is flat enough to receive the new flooring. If the existing floor is uneven, the new floor will not sit flat and will have a lot of movement underfoot. Once the new floor is laid, this is not easy to remedy.

The best way to level a floor is to use a latex smoothing compound. This can be applied directly over concrete or chipboard. On floorboards it is necessary to lay a 4mm ply over the floorboards prior to applying the smoothing compound. The plywood acts to stop the smoothing compound running through the gaps in the boards! The smoothing compound (which, when mixed, has the appearance of a liquid cement) should come with laying instructions. Ensure that the existing floor surface is dry and well swept. Mix the compound as per the manufacturers recommendations.

Smoothing compound - Picture courtesy of Woodflex Limited

The art of laying smoothing compound is to identify high spots on the floor and to fill the void created when a straight edge is placed between them. Pour onto floor. Use your straight edge (any straight piece of timber approx 5ft long) to spread the solution around the floor.

Always keep at least 1 end of the straight edge on a high spot of the floor. Never spread the screed over the high spots in the floor as this will just make them higher. If the floor is very uneven, do not try to get the floor flat at the first attempt - the smoothing compound will need to be applied thickly in the worst areas and then left to dry. By filling up the shallow parts of the floor with the smoothing compound, the floor becomes far flatter. Most smoothing compounds will be dry enough to apply a second coat within a couple of hours.

It is often not possible to get a very uneven floor perfectly level, but this is not the aim, - the aim is really to get the floor flat by eliminating as far as possible, undulations within the floor.

Step 3) Mark, Remove and Cut Doors

Fitting new flooring normally necessitates cutting doors. Although there is a tendency to want to get on with the floor, always cut doors before starting to lay the floor. The reason for this is that you can cut the doors in the room that you are working in without worrying about the woodshavings (get all the messy jobs out the way before the relatively clean job of laying the floor). Also, you won't have the worry of your door denting the new flooring whilst you are positioning it to plane it down. Do not remove doors until the preparation is complete (since the floor preparation will affect the floor height which is your guide for marking the door.)

To ascertain how much to remove from a door, close the door and place an offcut of flooring on the floor adjacent to the door. Place a pencil flat onto the flooring and run along the door. Do this across the width of the door. This line will be parallel with the lay of the floor. Once the door has been removed, draw another line using a straight edge, parallel with the first line but further up the door. This second line should allow for the thickness of the underlay and a further 5mm (approx) to give a good clearance.

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Plane doors - if there is a substantial amount to remove, cut the bulk of the waste off with a circular saw or hand saw and then finish with a plane. If doors are veneered, score along your cutting line with a 'stanley' knife to ensure the veneer does not splinter when cutting the door.

Step 4) Undercut door frames (Ensure that all necessary smoothing is complete and doors are removed)

To give any flooring job a professional appearance, the new floor should run underneath the architrave and door lining (frame).

To cut the architrave and door lining, first place an offcut of flooring on a piece of underlay adjacent to the door frame. Lay handsaw horizontally on the offcut of flooring and carefully cut away the architrave. The architrave should be cut through totally and the door frame cut away sufficiently to allow the flooring underneath.

Step 5) Laying The Flooring

Before laying your flooring, you will need to decide which direction to lay it. As a general rule, the flooring should be laid parallel to the longest wall. If the room is fairly 'square', it is best to lay the floor running away from (as opposed to across) the entry door. Most flooring you buy will of course come with laying instructions, and we hope that the following information can be used in conjunction with these.

Decide which wall will be your 'start wall'. Having rolled out the first line of underlay, lay the first line of flooring parallel to this wall (and approx 10mm from it). If you are laying a glued floor, do not glue yet. Ensure that this line is perfectly straight (the best way is to hold a piece of string along the side of the line of boards).

You will probably find that your wall is not perfectly straight! If the gap left between the floor and the wall is not consistent, there may be sections along the floors edge that the beading will fail to cover. If this is the case, you will need to 'scribe' the flooring to fit the shape of the wall - as follows:

Keeping your floor line straight, push it up to the wall until it touches in a couple of places. Lay a small offcut of flooring on the wall and run a pencil along the offcut to leave a mark on the laid flooring. Do this along the whole wall. When you have finished, you will have a line to cut along, which will ensure that your first line of flooring mirrors the profile of your wall.

You will need a jigsaw for this cut.

You can now fit (glue or click together) the first line into place. Place spacers (or use small offcuts of wood or ply) between the wall and the first line no more than 500mm apart. This will give you your expansion gap - use packers to make this gap the correct size for the flooring that you are laying, normally about 10mm, check with manufacturers laying instructions.

The first line is very important to the whole job - always ensure that this line is put in straight

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because this will ensure the rest of the floor fits together squarely and makes the fitting go much smoother.

Do not start the second line with a whole board. Use the offcut left from the first line to start the second. Continue laying floor, ensuring that the short ends of the boards do not line up too near to the short ends of boards in the preceding line (keep at least 300mm apart, or floor will be weakened)

The boards should be laid to give a random effect, i.e.; not lining up and not 'brickwork' or 'steps'. When trimming around a radiator pipe, first mark on the board where the centre of the pipe will be. For standard 15mm heating pipes, drill a 32mm hole through the flooring (this will allow for expansion within the floor. Then cut out a triangular section of floor to allow the flooring to be laid around the pipe. This section is glued back on completion of the floor.

The last line of boards will need to be 'scribed' to the wall. Use an offcut of flooring to mark the contour of the wall onto the final row of boards as shown below.

Step 6) Fit Beading and Thresholds

The final part of the job is to fit the thresholds and edge beading (or skirting board) Thresholds and beading are obtainable from the flooring manufacturer or can be supplied by ourselves.

Beading - pin the beading to the skirting board, pushing it down onto the flooring whilst fixing. Use a mitre saw to gain good 45 degree cuts. If butting two pieces of beading together on a long straight run of skirting, cut the joining ends at 45 degrees (not butt jointed) for a professional look.

Fitting skirting boards onto a wood floor is not a DIY job, since the skirts invariably need to be scribed to the floor.

Thresholds - If you are trimming around a hearth or up to a matwell, an L-section beading gives the best finish. In doorways a 'ramp' type beading is best if the adjoining floor is lower, whereas a 'flatbar' type is best for use where the adjoining floor is at the same level. As well as the flooring, we can supply all beads and thresholds as required. Fitting Scotia beading:-

Tools and materials you will require to fit flooring:

- * Tape measure
- * Jigsaw
- * Handsaw
- * Claw hammer and chisel (12 mm)
- * 'Stanley' knife
- * Mitre saw (or mitre box)
- * Trowel and mixing bucket if smoothing compound is required
- * PVA wood glue

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- * Tube of 'Gripfill' or 'No nails' type adhesive for fixing thresholds
- * 25mm panel pins for edge bead
- * Appropriate colour wood filler for pin holes in beading and minor defects in flooring
- * Rubbish bags for packaging and offcuts

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