Home Repair Resource center

HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

INSTALLING SHEET VINYL FLOORING

Sheet vinyl floor covering (linoleum) can be installed by just about anyone with a little knowledge – and a lot of patience. Trying to work too quickly can lead to errors that, because of the nature of the material, cannot be corrected.

THE "TRICKS" FOR SUCCESS

Before you start to install this type of flooring, it's essential to plan ahead, prepare the area to be covered, and get things organized. These are the most important "tricks" for a successful installation.

PLAN AHEAD

To plan ahead, first look at the room to be covered. Measure it. It's very hard to get sheet goods any wider than twelve feet. (The length is unlimited, but the bigger the piece, the harder it is to work with.) If both the length and width are longer than twelve feet, you are going to have a seam. Seams are usually a source of trouble later on and are more difficult to get right when you install the flooring, so you should avoid them if at all possible. If, however, you must have a seam, plan its location wisely. Try to put it in the least noticeable spot in the room, as far as possible from the main traffic patterns.

CHOOSING THE FLOORING

Once you have measured the room and planned for any seams, you can select the type and pattern of flooring material you want. The more expensive floorings are easier to install, since they are generally thicker and more pliable. (Because the most common difficulty in installing this kind of flooring is having the sheet tear when you are positioning it, a bit more money spent on quality goods may prevent this problem.) A more expensive material will also be more durable; it has a greater resistance to cuts, and the pattern will not generally rub off by the repeated sliding of a chair or by people walking on the same path through the room.

In addition to the quality of the flooring, consider the design. A pattern can make your room look larger or smaller, brighter or darker. A light, plain pattern will take more work to keep clean, while a medium-tone "busy" pattern will need less frequent cleaning.

ADHESIVE

In addition to the flooring material, you'll need to purchase adhesive. Be sure to use the adhesive specified by the flooring manufacturer. The wrong adhesive can discolor the flooring.

PREPARE THE AREA

After purchasing your flooring material, make the necessary preparations for installation. The first part of your preparation is to set aside enough time. You won't be able to work in the room for 24 hours after installation, so plan

accordingly.

You'll also need to get the floor ready for the new covering. Remove any quarter-round or shoe molding (the small molding between the baseboard and the floor.) If you can remove it without breaking, you can re-use it. (Pulling the nails from the back side will make it less likely that the molding will splinter.) Then, install the proper floor underlayment. (See separate handout on “Floor Underlayment” for how-to instructions.) This job will probably take four or five hours, so allow yourself enough time. Trying to install sheet flooring at 9:00 at night after working all day preparing the floor is asking for trouble.

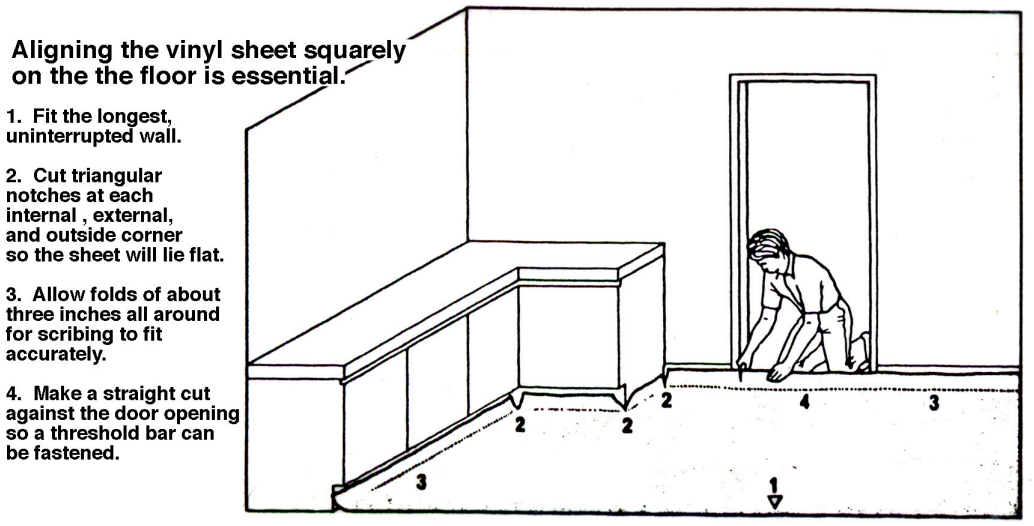
> **LET IT WARM UP**
>
> Unroll the flooring a day ahead, if possible, to let it relax. Never bring it in from outside and try to install it while it is cold – it will crack. Sheet vinyl flooring needs to be warm, relaxed, and pliable.

GET ORGANIZED

Now you’re ready to install. Organize your tools, along with your materials, before you start. (You don't want to walk through the glue to get a knife blade.) You'll need:

TOOL	PURPOSE
Razor blade knife	With several new blades
Framing square	For squaring the pattern to the walls
Straight edge	Like that used with wallpaper, for trimming
Trowel	For spreading the glue, with the proper size notches (according to the directions on the glue can)
Linoleum roller	Usually rented; to tightly bond the sheet goods to the floor and remove any bubbles

INSTALLATION



Aligning the vinyl sheet squarely on the floor

1. **Position the sheet.** To start, bring the sheet of flooring material into the room, and carefully unroll and position it. (You can let the excess curl up the walls.) Position the pattern so that it is straight and runs at a 90° angle to the walls. The framing square can help you do this.
2. **Make rough cuts.** Once the goods are straight, make some rough preliminary cuts to allow the flooring to lie down better. Always leave several inches to trim later; never cut all the way down to the finished line. At any right angle cut, put some tape on top of the flooring to reinforce it and help prevent tearing. Handle the flooring very carefully so it doesn't tear.
3. **Glue the first half.** Now, pull half the sheet back and fold it loosely over the other side, face to face. Then, apply the glue to the underlayment you've uncovered, according to the directions on the can. Glue to a straight line at the fold.
4. **Lay it into the glue.** Next, carefully roll the flooring back, embedding it in the glue as you go. Carefully press it into place, taking care not to twist or move the sheet as you lay it down.
5. **Roll and trim.** Then, finish that side by rolling it with the roller and using the knife and straight edge to trim the edges.
6. **Repeat on the other side.** When the first side is rolled and trimmed, repeat this procedure on the other. After completing both sides, thoroughly roll the entire floor again, and clean off any excess glue.

SEAMS

If your floor has a seam, install the first piece as described; then, butt the next piece edge-to-edge like wallpaper, lining up the patterns perfectly. Install the second piece like the first.

ALTERNATIVE: A PAPER PATTERN

An alternative installation method that some people find easier is to make a paper pattern of the floor (using brown Kraft paper, like that used for paper bags), position it on the sheet flooring, tape it in place, and cut around the pattern. You need to be very certain that the pattern is accurate and that it doesn't move when you are cutting around the edges. Once the flooring is cut to size, position it and glue it down as described above.

STEPS

To install sheet goods on a set of steps, cut pieces of flooring slightly larger than the risers and treads, so the pattern will be lined up after trimming. (You'll also want to line up the pattern at the floor and landing.) Glue each piece in place, butting against the adjacent pieces at the outer and inner edge of each step and trimming to size. Then, protect the edge of the step by installing wood or metal stair nosing (molding) over the outer corner joint between each tread and the riser below it. In addition, install quarter round molding between each tread and riser above it to keep the vinyl tightly in place at the inner corners.

WHEN YOU'RE DONE

After finishing, stay off the floor for 24 hours. Then, move back in and enjoy your new floor.

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Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

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