HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

PORCH FLOORING REPAIR

For do-it-yourself repairs

If the wood on your porch landing feels spongy, or if a few of the flooring boards have rotted and deteriorated, you are probably in need of some flooring repair.

It's not always necessary to replace the whole floor; you can often get away with replacing a few rotting boards here and there. Even if you have to replace a larger section, it doesn't have to be expensive. Most lumberyards carry 8-foot lengths of 4"-wide porch flooring – though if you have a less common size, the boards may be harder to find and more costly.

> **REPAIR EARLY**
>
> The really important thing is to get to the repairs early, before moisture starts to damage the frame underneath. Once water gets under the floor, the flooring will start to buckle – and the cost and time required to fix the problem will increase.

HOW PORCH FLOORING FITS TOGETHER

Porch flooring is usually not too hard to remove and replace, if you understand how the pieces go together. The working edges of flooring are called "**tongue**" and "**groove**." These ends are made to work together to hold the flooring down, with the tongue of each flooring piece fitting into the groove of the neighboring piece.

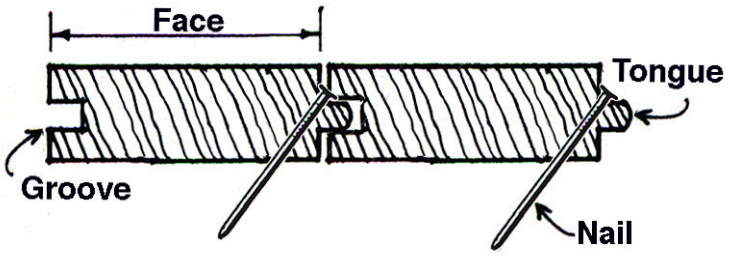


Illustration 1: Tongue-and-groove flooring, nailed diagonally through the tongue

REMOVE THE DAMAGED BOARDS

Use a hammer and wood chisel to remove the first rotten board, being careful not to damage the tongue or groove of the sound board next to it. Once you have the first board out, use a cat's paw or pry bar to take out any other damaged pieces.

CHECK THE JOISTS

Before putting down the replacement flooring, look carefully at the wood frame underneath. The flooring is nailed to boards called "**joists**" *(see Illustration 3)*. To have a firm floor, these joists must be solid, so check whether they have been damaged by moisture or dry rot.

> **RULE OF THUMB**
>
> If you can push a nail into a joist by hand to a depth of 1/2", then it is likely too far deteriorated to work as it should. You can usually repair or replace the joist yourself.

STRENGTHENING A JOIST ("SISTERING")

To strengthen a deteriorating joist, cut a piece of new wood to length, nail that piece along one side of the weakened joist, and then toe-nail it into the frame at each end. (This process is called "**sistering**.")

REPLACING A JOIST

If the original joist is totally rotten and must be replaced, attach the new joist to the supporting framework using a galvanized **joist hanger bracket** *(see Illustration 2)*.

In either case, use lumber the same size as the original joist (usually a 2 x 6 or 2 x 8). Outdoor treated wood is a good choice, as it will withstand moisture.

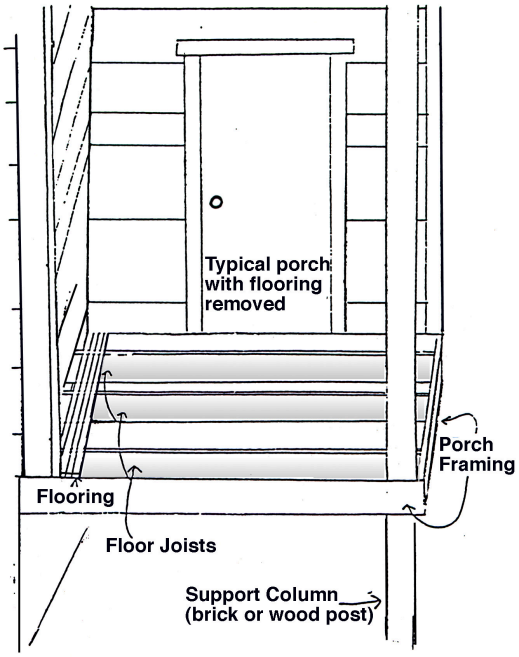
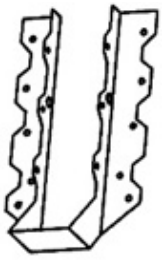


Illustration 3: Typical porch with flooring removed



Joist bracket

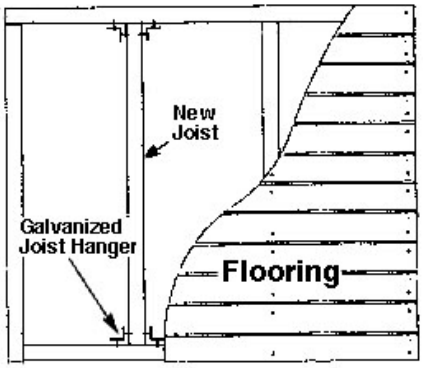


Illustration 2: New joist attached with galvanized joist hangers

INSTALL THE NEW FLOORING

Once you're sure the joists are sound, you can install the new flooring.

1. To protect the tongue edge and yet ensure that the floor boards fit tightly together, cut a small piece of flooring (about 6" long), and fit its groove along the tongue of the piece you're installing. Hammer against this small block as you move it along the board being installed, until the new piece fits snugly against its neighbor.

2. Then, nail diagonally down through the tongue side of the new board *(see Illustration 1)*; the nail will be hidden by the groove of the next piece you install. You'll have no exposed nails, reducing the chance of the floor warping.

3. If you are patching a small area, you may not know what to do when the tongue of your last board sticks out beyond the adjacent piece. Just cut the tongue off, using a circular saw or a hammer and wood chisel, and fit the last piece in place. Then, either nail it down through the top or glue it down with construction adhesive.

4. Don't try to cut the pieces exactly to length before you install them. Cut them a few inches longer than you'll need. When you've nailed all the pieces in place, snap a chalk line across all the boards at once, and cut off the ends with a circular saw.

PAINT RIGHT AWAY

Unless your new flooring is outdoor treated wood, paint it right away with an oil-base primer and polyurethane deck enamel, to prevent the wood from warping.

Then, pour a cool lemonade, settle in your porch chair, and enjoy the solid porch flooring under your feet.

Home Repair Resource center

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

WWW.HRRC-CH.ORG **+1.216.381.6100** **2520 Noble Road, Cleveland Heights, OH 44121**

© 2026, Home Repair Resource Center