

Installing Vinyl Floors

Vinyl tiles are great for updating the look of a kitchen or bathroom. Plus, they're easier to install than sheet vinyl flooring. We'll show you how it's done.

Materials

underlayment panels (1/4" lauan or plywood)
hammers
utility knives
chalk line
staple gun
notched-edge trowel
vinyl floor adhesive
gloves
safety glasses
measuring tape
pry bar
putty knife
jamb saw
circular saw

* If your new floor will go on top of the old floor, you'll need to trim the bottom of the doorjamb (**figure A**) so you can slide the new floor underneath. To cut the jamb, take a scrap piece of your underlayment and tile, place them on top of each other to show the correct height, and cut the doorjamb with a jamb saw.

Remove the appliances and furniture from the room and then carefully remove the shoe mold with a hammer and pry-bar. If your molding is in good condition you can replace it after you have installed the new floor.

Remove any transition strips from the area where you'll be installing the vinyl tiles.

* If you are planning on reusing your old shoe mold it is a good idea to number each piece consecutively on the back so that when you get ready to replace it the process will go much quicker.

To determine the square footage of the area you're tiling, multiply the length and width. If the room has an irregular shape, you may want to get the square footage of different sections of the room and then add those numbers together. Add 10 percent to your total to allow for mistakes and waste.

When you've finished measuring, you can begin attaching your underlayment (**figure B**). Make sure to install it rough-side down so that the wood texture doesn't show through the new vinyl. Attach the underlayment with staples, stapling as indicated on the underlayment material. If you are using unmarked plywood, you should nail or staple at least every 5 to 6 inches in the middle of the plywood and every 3 inches along the edges.

* If you choose not to use underlayment, keep in mind that the texture of the original floor may show through your new vinyl. If the original floor is textured, use a leveling compound to smooth out the entire floor.

When installing the new underlayment, be sure to stagger the seams of the panels and leave a quarter-inch gap along the walls to allow for expansion of the wood. When the underlayment has been attached, check to be sure all of your nails or staples are set below the surface. Any staples that may be protruding - even just a little bit - will ultimately leave a bump on the new flooring.

Sand all of the seams between your underlayment panels to ensure a good, smooth surface.

Next, use a broom and vacuum to pick up all of the dust created when sanding.

Mark the center of the room. To locate the center of the room, first measure and mark the center of two opposite walls and snap a chalk line between the two marks. Repeat the process for the other two opposite walls. The point at which the chalk lines cross is the center of the room. Use a framing square to be sure the lines are square with one another (**figure C**). Begin test fitting your tiles. You want to be able to work with as many full tiles as possible and you want to make sure that you will not end up with less than a half tile where the tiles meet the wall. You can adjust your reference lines as needed to achieve a layout that you are satisfied with.

* Vinyl tiles come in a wide variety. Some even simulate the look and feel of stone or ceramic tile.

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* If you plan to remove the old floor before installing the new one, keep in mind that vinyl floors installed before 1980 might contain asbestos. If you feel that your floor might contain asbestos, have it removed by a licensed asbestos-removal company.

Tack down a scrap piece of wood to help ensure that your first course of tiles will be straight (**figure D**).

Then begin applying adhesive. Use a 1/16" notched trowel to spread out the vinyl floor adhesive. Don't spread out more adhesive than you can cover in 15 minutes. Remember to wear gloves and work in a well-ventilated area. Also, be sure to read the manufacturer's directions carefully to identify any special precautions and curing times that the adhesive may require.

Place your first tile in the center of the floor, making sure it's in line with the marks you made earlier (**figure E**).

Then you can begin installing the tiles down the length of the room. The first tiles will determine the ultimate layout of the entire room, so you should make them as straight as possible. Work carefully to align your tiles correctly and quickly wipe away any adhesive that oozes up. Make certain that the arrows on the back of your tiles (**figure F**) all point in the same direction.

* Depending on the adhesive you use, you may be able to kneel on newly laid tiles to continue the installation.

After you have laid all your field tiles, you can begin working on the edge tiles. To do this, first place a tile directly on top of the last full tile near the wall. Make sure that you line up the edges and pattern lines of the tiles precisely. Then place another tile against the wall, overlapping the loose tile.

Mark the first loose tile with a pencil using the overlapping tile as a guide (**figure G**).

Then use a utility knife to cut the first loose tile. You may need to score the tile several times with your utility knife in order to cut through it. Then place the cut tile against the wall, making sure it is well-seated in the adhesive.

Continue laying down tiles-making cuts as needed-until you have completed the entire room.

Work your way around the entire room with a 100 lb. roller (**figure H**).

Once you finish rolling out the floor, you can begin replacing the shoe mold (**figure I**). If you are replacing the old shoe mold- and you numbered it when you removed it-this should be quick and simple process. You can use a pneumatic nailer to speed up the process, but a hammer and nail will work just as well. Remember to wear safety goggles any time you use a pneumatic nailer.

To finish out our new floor we installed the reducer strips at our door openings between rooms (**figure J**).

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Figure A



Figure F

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Figure B



Figure G



Figure C



Figure H



Figure D



Figure I



Figure E



Figure J

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