



DIY GUIDE

Baseboards & Trim DIY Guide

Install baseboards, shoe molding and quarter round that look professionally done: choosing trim, measuring and buying, coped inside corners, tight miters, scarf joints, nailing it right over new floors, and a finish that hides every joint.

9 chapters

Coping, step by step

Room measuring sheet

Trim calculator spreadsheet



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What's inside

Trim is the frame around a floor. Done well, nobody notices it; done badly, every corner and seam shows. The difference is mostly technique, and technique can be learned.

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Baseboard, shoe molding, quarter round and casing; MDF, primed pine or solid wood; paint-grade or stain-grade

02 Tools and materials

What you need, what you can rent, and what makes the biggest difference

03 Measuring and buying

Measuring each wall, counting corners, long pieces and fewer seams, and how much extra to buy

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Which one, and nailing it so the floor can still move

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About this guide

This guide was written by Vision Flooring LLC, a flooring company in Everett, Washington, led by owner Alex Babko. We have 20+ years of experience and 3,800+ clients behind us. Hardwood refinishing and installation, LVP, laminate, baseboards and floor repair after water damage are our everyday work, and this guide is what we explain to homeowners at their kitchen tables, written down so you can keep it.

This guide covers interior baseboards, shoe molding and quarter round in ordinary homes. Work safely: wear eye and hearing protection, keep fingers clear of saw blades, and follow your tools' instructions. Over a new floating floor, your flooring manufacturer's rules on expansion gaps come first.



General information, not a substitute for your instructions

Every home, floor and product is different. Your flooring and product manufacturers' instructions, your local building codes and your insurance policy always come first; where they differ from this guide, follow them. Work safely and call a licensed professional for anything you are not sure about.

How to use it

- Read it once start to finish (about an hour), then keep it handy. Every chapter has **"The short version"**: its key points in a few lines.
- Boxes marked **Pacific Northwest note** matter most in damp climates like ours; they are good practice anywhere.
- The worksheets at the back are made to print on letter paper. The spreadsheet that comes with this guide does the math for you.

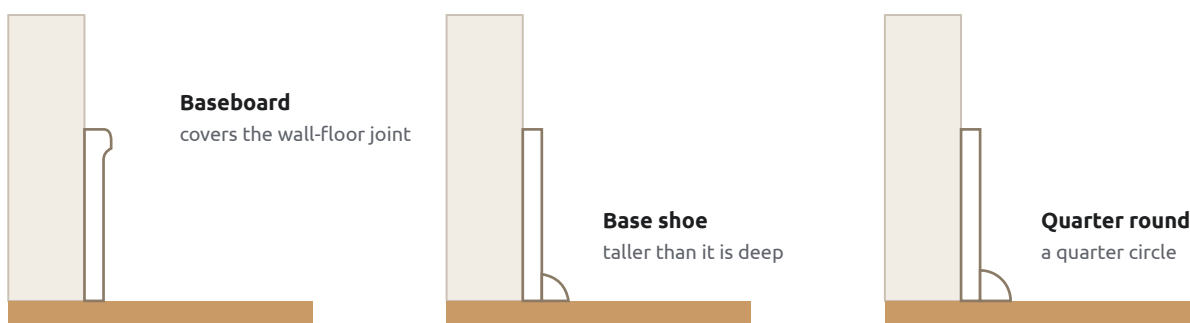
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Trim basics

Before buying anything, know what each piece of trim is for, what it is made of, and whether it will be painted or stained. Those three decisions drive everything else.

THE SHORT VERSION

- Baseboard covers the joint between wall and floor; shoe molding or quarter round covers the gap at the floor.
- Paint-grade trim (MDF, primed pine) is forgiving and affordable; stain-grade (solid wood) shows every joint.
- Match height and profile to the house: taller, simpler boards for modern rooms; profiled boards for traditional ones.
- Buy for the room it goes in: moisture-resistant trim in bathrooms, laundry rooms and entries.



Seen from the side: a baseboard alone, with base shoe, and with quarter round.

Materials

MATERIAL	BEST FOR	WATCH FOR
MDF (primed)	Painted trim in dry rooms; smooth, straight, affordable	Swells if it gets wet: not for bathrooms, laundry or entries with wet floors
Finger-jointed pine (primed)	Painted trim almost anywhere; holds nails well	The joints show through if stained; paint only
Solid wood (poplar, pine, oak)	Stained trim, or painted trim that takes knocks	Costs more; stain-grade joints must be tight
PVC or composite	Wet areas: bathrooms, laundry rooms, basements	Needs the right nails and adhesive; moves with temperature

Tools and materials

Trim needs accurate cuts and a nailer more than anything else. A good miter saw, a coping saw and a finish nailer do most of the work; the rest are small tools that make it neat.

THE SHORT VERSION

- Must have: miter saw, coping saw, finish nailer, tape measure, stud finder, level, pencil.
- Rent or borrow a finish nailer and compressor if you don't own them.
- A fine-tooth blade on the miter saw makes cleaner cuts than the blade that came with it.
- Buy filler, caulk and paint for the trim you chose: paint-grade and stain-grade need different ones.

Cutting and measuring

- ☐ Miter saw (a sliding saw for tall baseboard)
- ☐ Fine-tooth blade for trim
- ☐ Coping saw with spare blades
- ☐ Files or a rotary tool to fine-tune copes
- ☐ Tape measure and a sharp pencil
- ☐ Angle finder for corners that aren't 90°
- ☐ Utility knife

Installing and finishing

- ☐ Finish nailer (15/16 gauge) and brad nailer (18 gauge)
- ☐ Compressor and hose (or cordless nailers)
- ☐ Stud finder
- ☐ Pry bar, putty knife and nail nippers for removal
- ☐ Nail set, wood filler or spackle
- ☐ Paintable caulk and caulk gun
- ☐ Sanding sponge, painter's tape, brush



Safety

Eye protection for every cut and every nail. Hearing protection for the saw and compressor. Keep your hand at least a full hand's width from the blade, and let the blade stop before lifting it. Never hold a short piece by hand at the saw: cut short pieces from a longer board.

END OF THE FREE SAMPLE

Baseboards & Trim DIY Guide

You just read a few pages. The complete version has everything below, with every worksheet and the spreadsheet.

- ✓ Trim basics: baseboard, base shoe, quarter round; MDF, primed pine, solid wood or PVC; paint-grade or stain-grade
- ✓ Tools and materials, and safety at the miter saw
- ✓ Measuring each wall, planning seams and buying the right amount
- ✓ Removing old trim without damaging the wall
- ✓ Coped inside corners, step by step, plus outside miters, odd angles, scarf joints and returns
- ✓ Installing over new floating floors without pinning them, and over uneven floors
- ✓ Filling, caulking and painting, and a troubleshooting table for every common problem

Get the full guide →

visionflooringllc.com/baseboard-trim-diy-guide · Instant download · PDF guide + trim calculator and cut list

Questions first? Text **425-218-4234**; a real person answers.