



STEP-BY-STEP DIY GUIDE

LVP & Laminate **DIY** Install Guide

Install click-together vinyl plank or laminate the way professionals do it: the subfloor checks most guides skip, layout math that prevents skinny rows, clean cuts, transitions and trim.

10 chapters

5 printable worksheets

Layout calculator included



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What's inside

Read chapters 1 to 6 before you buy anything. Most failures of click floors are decided before the first plank goes down.

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An honest checklist, and the rooms to leave to a professional

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The complete list, and where a rented tool saves hours

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T Worksheets

Room and row plan · Flatness map · Shopping list · Pre-install checklist · Transition plan

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.

We install LVP, LVT and laminate for homeowners every week, and we also repair DIY floors that went wrong. This guide shows how to do it right the first time. One rule above all: **your product's installation instructions are the rulebook.** Gaps, stagger, flatness, acclimation and maximum room sizes differ by brand, and following them is what keeps your warranty valid. Where this guide gives a number, it is a typical example; the box decides.



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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Is DIY right for this room?

Click floors are the most DIY-friendly floors there are, and a careful first-timer can get a professional-looking result. But some rooms are much harder than they look. Be honest with yourself before you buy.

THE SHORT VERSION

- Simple rectangular rooms on a flat subfloor are ideal first projects.
- Stairs, lots of doorways, kitchens with islands and uneven subfloors are hard.
- Plan more time than you think; prep takes as long as installing.
- Read your product's installation instructions before you buy.

Rooms by difficulty

	GOOD FIRST PROJECT	HARDER: PLAN EXTRA TIME	CONSIDER A PROFESSIONAL
Shape	Rectangular bedroom, office, den	L-shapes, closets, angled walls	Many rooms connected, long hallways
Subfloor	Flat plywood or concrete	Small dips or humps to fix	Bouncy, damaged or very uneven floors
Openings	One or two doorways	Several doorways, a slider	Doorways in every wall
Fixtures	None	Floor vents, a radiator pipe	Kitchen cabinets and islands, toilets, tubs
Stairs			Always the hardest part: different products and skills

An honest self-check

- ☐ I am comfortable measuring accurately and cutting with a saw.
- ☐ I can kneel and work on the floor for several hours (knee pads help).
- ☐ I have read my product's installation instructions, start to finish.
- ☐ I have checked the subfloor (Chapter 4) or I am ready to fix it.

- ☐ I have a place to cut (garage, patio, or a well-ventilated room) and a way to keep dust down.
- ☐ I have time to finish without the room being needed halfway through.
- ☐ I know what I will do at doorways, stairs and other floors (Chapter 8).

Time: the part people underestimate

Installation is the satisfying part. It is often half the job or less. Emptying the room, removing old flooring and trim, checking and fixing the subfloor, undercutting door jambs and planning the layout can take as long as clicking planks together. Then come transitions, trim, nail holes and caulk. A good rule for a first project: plan about twice the time you expect, and don't start the day before guests arrive.



Learn in a closet first

If you have a closet that gets the same floor, start there. You learn the locking, cutting and stagger where mistakes don't show, before the main room.



Warranty and instructions

Flooring manufacturers warrant their product when it is installed according to their instructions. Skipping acclimation, ignoring the expansion gap or installing over an unsuitable subfloor can void the warranty. Keep the instructions, receipts and a box label with the lot number.

Tools and materials

Good tools don't make the floor, but the right few save hours and prevent the most common damage: chipped edges, broken locks and gaps.

THE SHORT VERSION

- Measure and mark: tape, square, straightedge, chalk line, pencil.
- Cut: utility knife (LVP), saws (lamine and long rips), an undercut or multi-tool saw for door jambs.
- Install: spacers, tapping block, pull bar, rubber mallet.
- Protect yourself: knee pads, safety glasses, hearing and dust protection.

Measure and mark

- ☐ Tape measure (25 ft)
- ☐ Carpenter's or speed square
- ☐ Long straightedge or level (6 to 10 ft) for flatness checks
- ☐ Chalk line
- ☐ Pencils and a marker
- ☐ Painter's tape

Cut

- ☐ Utility knife with plenty of new blades (LVP: score and snap)
- ☐ Miter saw or circular saw for crosscuts (lamine; thick LVP)
- ☐ Table saw or track saw for long rips, or a circular saw with a guide (rental stores rent them by the day)
- ☐ Jigsaw for notches and curves
- ☐ Undercut (jamb) saw or oscillating multi-tool for door jambs
- ☐ Drill with spade bits or hole saws for pipes

Install

- ☐ Spacers (or offcuts) for the expansion gap
- ☐ Tapping block made for click floors
- ☐ Pull bar for the last row and ends at walls
- ☐ Rubber mallet (white or non-marking)
- ☐ Vacuum and broom
- ☐ A clean scrap of plank and underlayment as a height guide

Finish

- ☐ Transitions for every doorway and change of floor
- ☐ Quarter round, shoe molding or new baseboards
- ☐ Finish nailer or hammer and nail set
- ☐ Wood filler and caulk for trim (not for the floor)
- ☐ Underlayment or vapor barrier if the product requires it

Protect yourself

Knee pads, safety glasses, hearing protection for saws, an N95 mask for laminate dust, gloves for demolition.

END OF THE FREE SAMPLE

LVP & Laminate DIY Install Guide

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

- ✓ Is DIY right for this room? An honest checklist before you buy anything
- ✓ Buying the right product and the right amount: wear layers, cores, pads and waste
- ✓ Subfloor checks and fixes: flatness, moisture, old floors (and when to test for asbestos)
- ✓ Layout: direction, balancing the first and last rows, doorways, hallways and expansion gaps
- ✓ Installation step by step: first rows, staggering, cutting, door jambs, pipes, vents and the last row
- ✓ Transitions, baseboards and quarter round, done without pinning the floor
- ✓ Troubleshooting: gaps, peaking, hollow spots and planks that won't lock; replacing a damaged plank

Get the full guide →

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