

Highlands Laminate Flooring Installation Guide

For Products Featuring the Unilin Uniclic Lock System

ATTENTION – PLEASE READ BEFORE INSTALLING

Important: Carefully inspect all boards for defects. This inspection should include the products color, quality, finish and locking system. The visual characteristics, pattern and shading of the product may vary from the sample. The suitability of Highlands flooring and accompanying products is the responsibility of the installer/owner. Any board that is considered questionable in appearance or dimensions should not be installed. ***Boards installed with visible defects are not covered under warranty.***

FOR BEST VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF YOUR FLOOR

This flooring replicates the look of a natural product which has natural variations in color, texture, and sheen/gloss. For best visual effect, work from 3-4 boxes and shuffle boards. Avoid installing similar boards next to one another and creating a staircase visual. Keep end joints staggered a minimum of 12”.

Site Requirements

STOP:

A moisture test is necessary and required to determine if high moisture exists in the subfloor. Flooring impacted by on-site elevated moisture will not be covered under warranty. It is important to note that flooring does not bring moisture to the jobsite. Any existing moisture problems need to be resolved before the installation begins. When using a calcium chloride moisture test for concrete subfloors (ASTM F1869), values must be ≤ 4 lbs/1000ft²/24-hr or less than 80% RH with an in-situ probe (ASTM F2170). Moisture readings of wood subfloors must be less than 12%. Acceptable job site conditions, including relative humidity and subfloor moisture conditions, must be maintained throughout the lifetime of the flooring.

Laminate is a durable floor covering, not intended as structural material. Laminate requires a clean, dry, secure subfloor that meets building codes. The following requirements are not intended to supersede federal, state or local building codes, but as with many other interior finish products, may require modifying existing structural components for successful installation.

Owner assumes responsibility for compliance with all building codes. Laminate flooring is suitable for use in climate controlled (35-65% RH and 60- 85° F) indoor installations only and should not be installed over any floor with a sump pump or in a room with a floor drain. Laminate flooring can be installed above, on or below grade. This product is not suitable for damp rooms such as bathrooms, saunas, rooms with wet or damp concrete, rooms with floor drains, or rooms that could potentially flood.

New concrete subflooring should be cured for approximately 30 days per 1” of slab thickness. Slabs are hygroscopic, so moisture conditions begin long before the flooring is installed and continues changing for the life of the slab as the moisture conditions around it changes. If the concrete slab has not been properly dried and cured before the flooring is installed, moisture and/or vapor problems are almost guaranteed.

Laminate flooring is installed as a floating floor and requires the use of T-moldings in doorways 4’ or less and in rooms 40’ or larger in length or width. Floor movement must not be strained by adhesives, nails, screws, hardware, or other fixed obstructions. Do not secure moldings directly to the flooring, which may prevent natural expansion.

Flooring should be one of the last items installed in any new construction or remodel project. All cabinets and islands should be installed prior to flooring.

Installations where wheelchairs (power or manual) would be used is not recommended.

This product must be installed in accordance with these installation instructions.

Site and Material Preparation

- For concrete subfloors, install vapor barrier with overlapped seams of 8" or more.

- Remove all flooring that was previously installed. Do not remove products unless they are asbestos-free without professional assistance.
- Undercut door frame and wallbase. Slide the flooring at least 1/4" underneath the door frame and wallbase. Also leave a concealed 3/8" minimum expansion space under each. Remember this product is primarily wood and needs room to expand and contract. At no point should this product be attached to any surface.
- Remove bumps or peaks in subfloor and fill depressions with floor leveling compound to ensure no more than 3/16" unevenness per 10-foot span.
- Acclimate unopened product for 48 hours prior to installation. If there is no time for acclimation, there should be no more than a difference of 25° F and 20% relative humidity between the stocking/transportation environment of the flooring and the final installation environment of the flooring.
- Clean debris from subfloor before installation.
- For boards without attached underlayment, install over single layer of underlayment appropriate for laminate floors. Make sure to follow the underlayment installation instructions, taking special care to seal all foam edges with sealing tape and repair all rips and perforations in the underlayment vapor barrier prior to flooring installation.
- For boards with attached underlayment, an additional padded underlayment is not recommended prior to flooring installation. A separate vapor barrier should be used in conjunction.

Acceptable subfloor types:

- CDX Underlayment Grade Plywood (at least ½" thick)
- Underlayment grade particleboard
- OSB (at least ¾" thick)
- Concrete slab
- Ceramic tile
- Resilient tile & sheet vinyl

INSTALLATION TOOLS

For all installation methods:

- Moisture Meter
- Tape measure
- Pencil
- Chalk line
- Crosscut power saw
- Jamb Saw
- 3M Scotch-Blue™ 2080 Tape
- Rubber mallet
- Tapping Block
- 3/8" spacers
- Floor Level
- 100% Silicone Sealant

INSTALLATION INSTRUCTIONS

Note: This product uses the Unilin Uniclic locking system. For additional information on regarding this locking system please visit www.unilin.com

Inspection: Inspect material in daylight for visible issues prior to installation. Check if subfloor and site conditions comply with the specifications described in these instructions. If you are not satisfied, contact your supplier immediately and do not install.

Before laying: Measure the room to determine plank layout. For best visual results, planks in the first and final row should be cut no less than half the width of the plank. Purposely mix and arrange planks in a pleasant blend of shades. Lay planks preferably following the direction of the main source of light. The use of expansion moldings is required for floor surfaces exceeding lengths of 40 ft in either direction. If installing in moisture prone areas, please refer to the Recommendations for Wet Area Installation section of this guide.

INSTALLING THE FIRST ROW:

1. Starting from the left with the tongue-side facing the wall, carefully place the first board in place, using spacers to leave a minimum 3/8" expansion gap between wall and edges of the plank.
2. Align and attach the end joints of the remaining planks in the first row by inserting the tongue into the groove while holding the plank at a 20° to 30° angle from the floor. Apply pressure inward and down until the planks lock together. The planks are now fully locked. Continue in this manner until reaching the final board in the first row.
3. Cut the final plank to length, no less than 8".

CONTINUING THE INSTALLATION:

4. For plank installations, if the cut plank is at least 12" in length, use it to begin the second row. If the cut plank is shorter than 12" do not use it. Instead, begin with a new board that is at least 12" in length and allows 12" between the end joints on the adjacent planks.
5. Begin the second row by inserting the tongue on the long side of the plank into the groove of the plank in the first row. Hold the plank in a 20° to 30° angle while applying pressure inward and down until they lock together. To complete the row, it is necessary to lock the short end of the next plank into the previous plank first before locking the long side of the plank. Angle the plank and push the tongue into the groove and adjust until the tongue locks into place. It may be necessary to lift both planks slightly to lock the joint together.
6. Carefully inspect the long edge and short ends of the planks for any gapping before moving on to the next plank. If you notice a gap, STOP, disengage, and reinstall the board to ensure a snug fit.
7. It is critical to keep the first two rows straight and square, as they are the foundation for the rest of the installation.
8. Install the remaining planks and rows in the same manner.
9. Be certain to maintain the recommended expansion space along the perimeter and achieve a random appearance by working out of multiple cartons.

INSTALLING FINAL ROW:

10. The last row may need to be cut lengthwise (ripped). Optimal stability is lost if the planks are cut less than half its width and should be avoided by accurately measuring the room.
11. Place the final row of planks on top of the last row installed and use an additional plank as a scribe to trace the contour of the wall. Cut planks along tracing.
12. Position cut planks in final row and tap all joints (long AND short ends) with the rubber mallet.

INSTALLING UNDER A DOOR JAMB:

1. Installation under moldings (such as door jambs) may require that the top lip of the groove on the end be reduced in size.
2. Using a small knife, carefully shave off the ledge of the groove.
3. After the groove ledge has been trimmed, place the board in place and tighten with a pull bar. The installer must be sure that the required expansion gap has been maintained and the flooring is not pinched.
4. If fit is not correct, re-trim as necessary.
5. Place a bead of cyanoacrylate adhesive, like Loctite 495, on the bottom lip of the groove.
6. Insert the tongue into the groove and engage with a pull bar. Hold the board in place with painter's tape (3M Scotch-Blue™ 2080 Tape) until the glue is dry. Do not use masking tape or duct tape as they may damage the floors finish

Installation Around Fixed Objects (such as Pipes)

1. Allow 3/8" expansion space around pipes or other fixed objects.

Wet Area Installation

Tip: for ease of installation use PE Foam backer with a diameter closest to the floor's overall thickness.

1. Insert compressible PE foam backer rod into room perimeter expansion space and cover completely with flexible silicone caulk.
2. Insert compressible PE foam backer rod at transitions and cover completely with flexible silicone caulk.
3. Use 100% flexible neutral cure silicone caulking around door frames and other fixed objects (e.g. plumbing).
4. Install baseboards, quarter-rounds or other applicable moldings and immediately wipe up excess caulk.
5. Ensure baseboards or quarter-rounds are attached to walls, not floors.

NOTE: PE Foam backers are suggested as a cost-effective option to minimize the excessive use of silicone.

NOTE: Do not use acrylic based caulks as they are rigid and will prevent the floor from expanding and contracting. Use only neutral curing 100% flexible silicone caulk.

In-floor Radiant Heat

- Electric heating mats and hydronic heating systems that are not embedded into the subfloor are not recommended for use underneath Highlands floors. Radiant heat systems must be embedded a minimum of 1/2" from the flooring.
- Concrete subfloors must be allowed to properly cure and dry prior to operation of the radiant heating system.
- Radiant heating system should be in operation for 3 weeks prior to installation of the flooring.
- Set the system's temperature at 65°F (18.3°C) for 24 hours before, during and 24 hours after flooring installation. Gradually increase the temperature to the preferred operating level over the course of a week after flooring installation.
- Surface temperature must not exceed 85°F (29.4°C).
- T-moldings must be used to separate heating zones.

Highlands Floors can be installed over an embedded radiant-heated floor using the floating method. A floating method can only be used if a pad is already attached or an approved padded underlayment for laminate is used.

Warning: Failure to follow flooring and underlayment manufacturer's guidelines and temperature limitations will result in failure and void warranty. Refer to the radiant heat system's manufacturer recommendations for additional guidance.

AFTER INSTALLATION

Flooring should be one of the last items installed in a project. In order to protect the floors while other trades are finishing their work prior to final cleanup and turnover to the owner, use rosin paper and only use 3M Scotch-Blue™ 2080 Tape to hold the rosin paper to the floor (other blue tapes may damage the finish). Clean the floor thoroughly before laying the rosin paper to ensure that no debris is trapped underneath. DO NOT USE plastic film or other non-breathing coverings as this can cause the floor to become damaged from humidity buildups.

- Dust mop or vacuum your floor to remove any dirt or debris.
- It is suggested that you clean the floor using a recommended ph neutral cleaner.
- Install any transition pieces that may be needed (reducers, T-moldings, etc.).

Protection and Maintenance of Your Floor

Lasting beauty can be achieved through purchasing a quality floor covering and providing proper on-going maintenance.

- Avoid exposure to long periods of direct sunlight. Close blinds or drapes during peak sunlight hours. Floor covering subjected to excessive heat and light is subject to thermal degradation. Use appropriate precautions to minimize potential effects on the floor covering.
- Furniture should be moved onto the newly installed floor using an appliance hand truck over hardboard runways.
- Frequently moved furniture should be equipped with felt pads to avoid scratching the floor. Heavy furniture and appliances should be equipped with non-staining large surface floor protectors. Furniture with castors or wheels must be easy swiveling, large surface non-staining and suitable for resilient floors. Do NOT use metal or ball type castors as they can damage the floor.
- Use floor protectors under furniture.
- All rolling chairs should only be used over chair mats.
- Pool tables should be moved into position, do not slide across the floor. A level subfloor and wider expansion gap is essential in these areas. Furniture pads are recommended to spread the weight for pool tables with smaller feet.
- Use walk off mats at entrances to prevent dirt and grit from being tracked on to the floor.

- Use non-staining mats. Rubber may discolor the floor.
- Do not track asphalt-driveway sealer or automobile-oil drips on to the floor covering.
- Oil or petroleum-based products can result in surface staining.
- Sweep or vacuum the floor regularly to remove loose dirt. Avoid using a vacuum with a beater bar or turn beater bar off.
- Do NOT use electric brooms with hard plastic bottoms with no padding.
- Do NOT use steam mops.
- Clean up spills immediately.
- Do NOT use harsh cleaners or chemicals on the floor. Do NOT use abrasive scrubbing tools. Do NOT use detergents, abrasive cleaners or “mop and shine” products.
- Laminate flooring, like other types of smooth floors, may become slippery when wet. Allow time for the floor to dry after cleaning. Immediately wipe up wet areas from spills, foreign substances, or wet feet.