

# How To Install Vinyl Floor Covering

By John Davison

While it might be tempting to just order some carpet, you might want to consider a vinyl floor, particularly in the kitchen.

There are lots of different flooring options to consider. Early on, you'll want to shop the options. Draw a map of the room(s) you want to install new flooring in. Measure the room as best you can. To get the square footage of the room, multiply the length times the width. You may have to consider the room in sections if it's in an L-shape or there are a lot of cutouts. If you need to know square yards, divide the square footage by 9.

Make note of the direction of your flooring if it has a pattern that runs in a certain direction, such as a wood grain. Also, be sure to order a minimum of 10 percent more than what you think you'll need. You will also need to consider the pattern match of the vinyl. This will account for any pieces you cut wrong; odd cuts you need to make or future patch-ups. Re-ordering flooring is not easy. Some styles can have amazing variations and manufacturers can stop making a particular style with no warning to the retailer.

## Preparing your old floor

If you're putting a new floor over an old resilient floor that has an embossed surface or other surface irregularities, a new underlayment is usually required—generally a layer of quarter-inch 5-ply plywood or lauan plywood. The seams and nail heads should then be covered with latex underlayment or some other non-shrinking filler – think of it as spackling for your floor – and sanded smooth after it dries. Otherwise, the irregularities will transfer to the new surface and weaken the adhesive. If the existing resilient floor is in good shape you may be able to apply the new vinyl floor covering over it.

## Installing sheet vinyl

Sheet vinyl installation is fairly basic, but types of adhesives are different so be sure to use whatever the manufacturer recommends. Generally speaking, sheet vinyl comes in rolls 12 feet wide and it will crack if it's bent while rolled up.

Start the installation by making a paper template of the floor's perimeter that you can then use to cut the vinyl sheets before installation. Some manufacturers offer floor template kits or you can use resin paper. Roll the paper out along the edges of the room, taping the pieces together

wherever you have to turn a corner or make a seam. Periodically, cut a small hole in the paper and put a piece of duct tape over the hole to hold the paper in place.

Then, place your template over your first piece of flooring, taping it down via your tape holes. After test-fitting the piece or pieces you'll need, fold the piece back to half its length and spread enough adhesive to glue that end with a proper notched trowel. Put the piece back down and repeat for the other half. Use a baker's rolling pin to smooth out the whole piece, working from the center to the edges.

If you do require a seam, the initial pieces should be cut to allow about three inches of overlap at the seam. When you lay the second piece, allow it to overlap the first one at the seam. Lay a straightedge down along the overlap, line it up with a seam in the pattern and cut down through both pieces from one end to the other.

## **Installing vinyl tile**

Vinyl tile installation usually begins in the exact center of the room. Snap a chalk line at the midpoint of two parallel walls. Find the midpoint of that line and use a framing square to mark off perpendicular lines running to the other two walls.

Test fit the tiles along the lines to see if that produces an eye-pleasing layout and adjust as needed. I like to adjust my lay-out so that any scrap cuts will end up being under the stove, refrigerator or other appliances, if possible.

Start in the center laying the tiles out in one of the four sections made by the layout lines, working your way toward the corner and building equally along each line and the middle of the section. Vinyl tiles are usually sold with a self-stick backing, which is protected by paper till you're ready to go. Then you pull that off, lay the tile down and stick it to the floor.

If you need to cut any tiles, simply use a utility knife and a straight edge. You'll want to leave about a quarter-inch gap between the tile and the wall to allow for expansion. Your shoe molding will hide this gap. Don't use self-stick vinyl tile in the bathroom or on cement basement floors. The adhesive won't stand up to the moisture and temperature swings.

Whichever style you choose for your new flooring - vinyl, ceramic or wood - and however much time and work you want to put into it, make sure to follow all manufacturers' instructions. You want a floor you can be proud of and nothing beats a job well done the first time. All flooring, flooring supplies, tools - even advice - are available at your nearest floor covering, home improvement or hardware store.

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