

CORK FLOOR TILES LAYING INSTRUCTIONS

CORK

Combining undeniable acoustic and thermal qualities, cork brings warmth, silence and comfort to all interiors. Environmentally friendly, naturally stylish, hard-wearing, water resistant, yet easy to install and maintain, cork is the perfect material for floors.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS OF INSTALLATION

The most common problems and source of dissatisfaction are not caused by the product itself but by inappropriate installation procedures (deficient sub-floor preparation, use of wrong adhesives or finishes...). Installing cork floors in areas with excessive sub-floor moisture should be avoided. When using levelling compounds the complete drying of compound is essential for a good adhesion. It is, therefore, important to follow the manufacturer's instructions. Only recommended adhesives and finishes should be used.

CONDITIONING

It is important that the cork and the glue are at room temperature in which the installation takes place. Packaged tiles and adhesive should be acclimatized at job site in a dry area for a minimum of 48 hours. Tiles should only be unpacked just before starting the installation. During laying, the temperature should be maintained between 15°C and 25°C and relative humidity between 35% and 65%.

SUB-FLOOR

Preparation of the sub-floor is essential for a successful installation. Concrete floors must be quite smooth, levelled, permanently dry and free of dust and grease. On non-floating sub-floors and on sub-floors that are not sufficiently ventilated, adequate moisture insulation should first be applied. The percentage of moisture of the sub-floor must not exceed 3%. Irregularities in the sub-floor must not be filled with glue but should be smoothed with adequate filler. Wooden floors have to be made smooth (it may be necessary to machine sand the floor). Linoleum or vinyl must be removed or, if not possible, must be made quite rough to ensure adhesive bond.

UNDER-FLOOR HEATING

If under-floor heating has been implemented in the sub-floor, the following basic rules apply:

- Turn off the heating 48 hours before installation starts.
- Turn on the heating in steps not earlier than 72 hours after installation.
- Do not exceed the temperature of 26 °C measured at the surface of the floor covering. Higher temperatures are not only giving discomfort to feet but may have influence on the bond of the adhesive used.

It must be taken into account that expansion and contraction of the cork floor can occur.

TOOLS

Cutter;
Ruler;
Pencil;
Chalk line;
Roller;
Wooden or rubber mallet;

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CONTROL

Before installation, please control the tiles. If you come across a defect in production please register the complaint at your supplier immediately and do not install!

When checking the cork tiles, keep in mind that you are dealing with a natural material. The tiles may have slight variations in colour or structure. They contribute to the charm and originality of a cork covering. To achieve the most pleasing blend of shades, shuffle different packs before laying. Check if there are no small differences in size between the different tiles. If this is the case, it is better to group the tiles of the same size.

PLANNING THE LAYOUT

First, determine how you will install the tiles. Rectangular tiles should be installed staggered (or "half-brick"). Square tiles can be laid "in bond" (i.e. in line with each other). The layout of the installation is to be determined by the installer (who may consult the end-user if appropriate). Principles, which should normally be followed, are:

- Minimise the number of joints necessary;
- Lay strips along passages, in the direction of traffic, along the length of a room, or towards the wall containing the main window;
- Avoid the use of sensitive patterns where there is a risk of fading from high temperatures or intense sunlight;
- Ensure that, as far as possible, material from the same batch is used in the same area;

Once you have selected the layout, you must determine the starting point. Generally, installation starts in the middle of the room and progresses towards the sides. Stretch a so-called adjusting string from the middle of the opposite walls. Start along the string and determine the way and the pattern by laying some loose tiles.

GLUING

The recommended adhesive for installing cork tiles is contact adhesive. This means that the adhesive has to be applied on both the support and the tiles. Stir adhesive well before use. Apply a uniform adhesive layer on the back of the cork tiles using a low nap roller. Make sure that the applied amount is sufficient to form a complete film of adhesive (around 90-130 g/m²). A coat of adhesive should also be applied to the sub-floor. Follow the instructions of application of the adhesive on the packaging labels, as well as the information from technical data sheets.

Limit yourself to an area that can be covered in two hours. The surfaces must show a closed, evenly glossy film when the adhesive has dried. Pre-coated tiles may be stacked after drying and stored up to one day. Clean the used equipment with warm water.

LAYING

When the adhesive is dry (normally it turns clear and is tacky to the touch, roughly 30 to 60 minutes depending on relative humidity and the type of sub-floor), place the first tile and press it against the floor with the help of a rubber hammer. Once the first cork tile is in place, align the next tile to the edges of the first and press it tightly against the edges of the first. Special attention should be paid to the alignment of each tile. Tiles must be hit with the rubber hammer for positive contact between sub-floor and tile, particularly around the edges and corners.

The floor must be rolled in both directions with a 50 Kg roller every 30 minutes, to ensure that the tiles are firmly bedded into the adhesive.

Light pedestrian traffic may normally be allowed after 1 day.

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FINISHING

We recommend that cork floor tiles should be varnished after installation (sealing of joints and improving wear resistance). Always varnish with a specially recommended varnish. It is essential to follow the varnish supplier instructions strictly.

After the laying is completed, wait at least 24 hours in order to let the adhesive coat drying completely (depending on the type of adhesive, temperature and relative humidity of the air). Clean the floor thoroughly, vacuum it and remove any adhesive stains, if necessary by sanding slightly. Apply 3 coats of varnish (when varnishing pre-finished cork floor tiles, 1-2 coats are enough).

Light traffic is normally allowed after 1 day, but final hardening of the finish is achieved after 1 week.

ROOM CONDITIONS

It must be taken into account that expansion and contraction of the cork tiles can occur. This is a natural consequence of changes in interior temperature and humidity as well as in the structure's moisture content. A relative humidity between 40 % and 60 % is considered the ideal room condition, not just for your health and well-being, but also for your cork covering. When the rooms are heated during winter months, humidity is often below this range and this may lead to shrinkage of cork and gaps. Please avoid dry air by installing humidifiers and putting in houseplants.

PREVENTIVE CARE

The cork floor must be kept clean. Never use cleaning products with abrasive ingredients or solvent based. Furniture legs should have protective pads to avoid scratches. Furniture and other heavy objects must be placed carefully.

A doormat should be laid inside the front door to help protect against dirt and sand.

Chair castors should be of type W (soft). For additional protection, polycarbonate mats under castor chairs should be used.

Avoid sharp or pointed objects with concentrated weight such as high heels on your cork floor.

Prolonged contact of plasticizer-containing material (e.g. rubber, latex, plastics...) with the varnish may cause non-reversible stain of the floor.

Cork is a natural product and may tend to fade when exposed to sunlight over long periods of time. Use blinds or curtains to prevent cork fading by direct solar radiation.

CLEANING

The cork floor must be kept clean using a mop or vacuum cleaner. Dust and dirt behave like sanding paper and are thus to be removed immediately. If necessary (heavier soiling) the floor can be damp-mopped using an appropriate cleaning product.

MAINTENANCE

Maintenance can become necessary from time to time to refresh the protective layer. First clean your floor and then apply a thin layer of a recommended maintenance product.

Please observe the particular maintenance instruction for your cork floor. For the correct use follow the instructions on the packaging labels of each product, as well as the information from technical data sheets.

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BASIC CLEANING

Manual or mechanical basic cleaning can become necessary in case of heavy stains which cannot be removed during maintenance cleanings. To basic-clean your floor, use an appropriate “remover”, applying as little solution as possible and working in sections. Damp-mop the floor subsequently with clean water. After the floor has dried completely, a new maintenance care must be performed.

Basic cleanings should be carried out as seldom as possible.

RENOVATION

All varnished floors need refurbishment depending on the intensity of use. When refurbishing, sand the old varnish carefully and remove wax, maintenance products, dirt, etc. Remove the dust by vacuuming and apply 2 coats of a recommended varnish.

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