Laminate Flooring Issues

Today, we will take a look at issues associated with Laminate flooring.

One of the biggest issues I deal with on any floating resilient flooring is flooring people are not taking the time to make sure the subfloor is flat and within tolerance. The subfloor tolerance any resilient flooring is 3/16″ in 10 feet.

Peaking

Peaking refers to a situation in which the laminate floor boards push up against each other and result in high points at the joints. There are a number of reasons why this can happen. The most common cause of peaking is a lack of expansion space between the laminate floor and the walls around the perimeter of the installation, or a lack of expansion space between the laminate floor and laminate moldings. This situation is easily remedied. Simply follow the peaking board's perpendicular to the wall or molding, remove the necessary molding- if against the wall, remove the baseboard and cut the laminate board that meets the wall or molding, thus giving the floor more space to expand. The peaking will not however dissipate immediately, it is necessary to place a weighted object on the peaking areas.

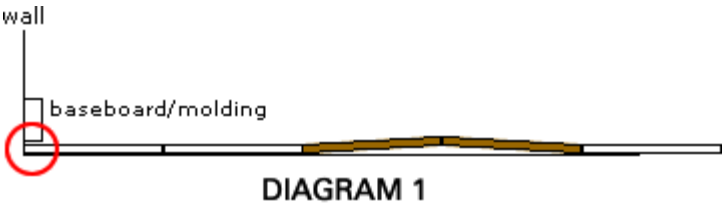


DIAGRAM 1

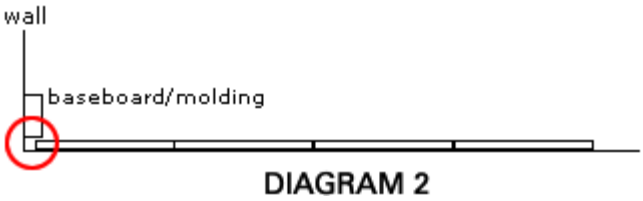


DIAGRAM 2

Another reason for peaking could be due to the fact that the moldings in the doorways or around the perimeter of the room have been fixed to the floor, thus preventing the floor from expanding. Remember that a laminate floor is a floating floor and must not be fixed to the sub floor or moldings at any point as this will not allow the floor to expand and contract, as these floors naturally do.

Peaking can also arise due to the fact that a continuous area of flooring is too long in one direction without an expansion joint to relieve the pressure. This will generally happen in areas where the floor runs for over 40 foot

– this number differs per manufacturer. Check the manufacturers recommendations if you feel that your area is very large in one direction.

Buckling or Warping
Buckling or warping is almost always as a result of moisture and/ or water damage. Laminate flooring is affected by water in a number of ways. High moisture content in the air can sometimes lead to buckling or warping. Excessive water on the surface of the floor can also lead to buckling or warping. For this reason it is important never to wet mop a laminate floor. The most common cause of warping or buckling is water or dampness rising from the subfloor in conjunction with the lack of a sufficient moisture barrier.

Buckling or warping can also be as a result of an inferior product construction. Laminate floor surfaces are laminated under extremely high pressure. For this reason, it is necessary to have a pressure balancing layer on the bottom of the boards. This layer is made up of a rigid material and equalizes the pressure that is exerted form above.

Gapping
Gapping is not very common with laminate flooring. Gapping is a situation in which the laminate flooring boards tend to pull away from one another resulting in gaps between the boards. This situation will occur if the temperature drops to a point way below what is considered normal. For this reason it is very important to always acclimatize your flooring to the room temperature and conditions of the room in which the laminate is to be installed.

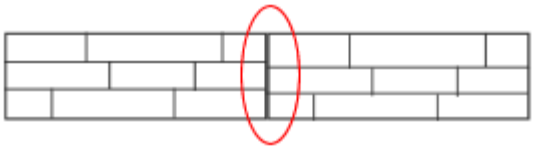
Mold and Mildew
Issues concerning mold and mildew are gaining increased attention from both residential and commercial property owners as well as the public at large. In virtually all situations if there is a mold issue, there is an excessive moisture issue. In order to prevent, control, or eradicate mold and mildew, one must first identify, evaluate, and eliminate the source of excessive moisture.

Prior to removing an existing flooring or installing a new floor or repairing an existing laminate floor, if there are visible indications of mold or mildew or the presence of a strong musty odor in the area where flooring is to be removed or installed, the source of the problem should be identified and corrected.

To deal with mold and mildew issues, you should refer to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines that address mold and mildew. Depending on the mold and mildew condition present, those remediation options range from clean-up measures using gloves and biocide to hiring a professional mold and mildew remediation contractor to address the condition. Laminate flooring, because it is relatively non-porous, allow any mold and mildew on the flooring surface to be easily cleaned. Remediation measures may require structural repairs such as replacing underlayment and/or subfloor contaminated with mold or mildew as a result of prolonged exposure to moisture. The EPA mold guidelines are contained in two publications “A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture and Your Home” (EPA 402-K-02-003) and “Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings ”(EPA 402-K-01-001). Appendix B of the “Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings” publication describes potential health effects form exposure to mold, such as allergic and asthma reactions and irritation to eyes, skin, nose and throat. These publications can be located on EPA’s website at www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/

Off register
Off register is a situation in which the flooring pattern on one flooring board does not match up the pattern on

the connecting board. Note however that manufacturers do allow for a small variance. This situation however almost never occurs, and in the event it does you can claim based on manufacturing defect.



Expanding High Density Fiber Board (HDF)
The core (middle section) of a laminate floor plank is made from HDF. HDF subjected to water, will swell and fall apart. Most laminate cores however are treated with water repellent chemicals. You might find that your laminate floors feel soft and squishy (for lack of a better term) when you walk on them. This is probably the result of a water soaked core. If this situation arises, your only remedy is to replace the affected boards.

Chipped corners
Excessive chipping on corners can be as a result of any of the following:
a) Wrong method of installation used. A laminate floor utilizing the click mechanism of installation does not require a tapping block or mallet for installation, the boards simply click together. Using a tapping block and mallet to install this type of floor will result in marks, indentations and chipping.
b) Cleaning the floor with a vacuum cleaner that contains a beater bar.
c) Also chipping can result of a poor quality laminate floor

General maintenance

Cleaning laminate flooring is simple- dirt and dust are easily removed with a vacuum or broom.

For more difficult-to-remove soil, use a cloth moistened very lightly with plain water. Then wipe the surface with a clean dry cloth. Under no circumstances should the floor be wet mopped.

Heavier stains may be removed with manufacturer recommended laminate flooring cleaner available from most **flooring retailers**.

Never use soap solutions, waxes, sealers, polishes, or any abrasive materials.

Protect the laminate flooring in high traffic areas and from excessive tracking of outside dirt and soil with mats at all entrances.

Protective felt pads on chair and furniture legs are recommended to further protect the floor.

Occasionally, things may become "stuck" to your floor, such as gum or candle wax. This situation is best handled by letting the spot harden completely, then scraping it gently off the floor with a plastic scraper. Residue can then be removed using a clean rag damped with a little manufacturer recommended cleaner.

Maintenance Tips

Do's

Wipe up spills immediately

Use door mats and throw rugs outside room entrances and in front of kitchen sink and refrigerator to help keep dirt and grit off your floor, and to prevent damage and excessive wear.

Place runners and area rugs along high traffic areas.

Move heavy appliances and furniture by using a dolly rolled over plywood or pressed board.

Use furniture leg protector pads under all furniture legs.

Don't

Don't use any of the following products on your floor: ammonia based cleaners, acrylic finishes, wax based products, detergents, bleach, polishes and oil soaps, or abrasive cleaning soaps.

Don't allow water to stand on your floor for any length of time.