

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.

GETTING STARTED:

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. 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 acclimatised at job site in a dry area for a minimum of 2 days. Tiles should only be unpacked just before starting the installation. During laying, the temperature should be maintained as stable as possible. Note on Tile Conditioning: Due to the natural characteristics of cork, tiles stored in their original packaging for extended periods may occasionally experience slight warping or curling. If this occurs, the tiles must be flattened prior to installation. Lay the affected tiles out on a clean, flat surface and weigh them down evenly until they are completely flat.

PREPARATION OF THE SUPPORT:

The quality of a finished installation can be very much dependent upon the preparation of the sub-floor and the attention paid to the recommendations made by the manufacturers of the adhesives and levelling compounds. It is essential that the substrate is levelled, smooth, permanently dry, firm and free of cracks, dirt, grease, oils, solvents, sealers, and old adhesives residues. Any unevenness must be levelled with an appropriate levelling compound.

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, rubber mallet.

CONTROL:

Ensure that, as far as possible, material from the same batch is used in the same area. 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 floor covering. To achieve the most pleasing blend of shades, shuffle tiles from 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. Cork tiles can be laid staggered ("half-brick") or in line with each other ("in bond"). 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 chalk string from the middle of the opposite walls and mark a guiding line. Start along the line and determine the way and the pattern by laying some loose tiles.

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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 the adhesive well before use. Follow the instructions on the adhesive packaging labels, as well as the information from technical data sheets. Apply a uniform adhesive layer on the back of all the cork tiles using a low nap roller. Make sure that the applied amount is sufficient to form a complete film of adhesive (around 100-120 g/m²). The adhesive on the back of tiles needs to dry completely. As the adhesive is a waterbased dispersion (most of it is water), it is very important that all the water dries off and that the cork tile is totally dry. When the adhesive is dry the coated surfaces are tacky to the touch and must show a closed, evenly glossy clear film. Pre-coated tiles may be stacked after drying and stored up to one day. Cork tiles can be pre-coated with the contact adhesive before the day they are laid (up to 24 hours in advance). On the day they are laid, the adhesive only needs to be applied to the subfloor and, following a sufficient drying time of 30-120 minutes (depending on the temperature, relative humidity and the absorption of the subfloor), the pre-coated cork tiles can be fixed in place using the contact method. You should limit yourself to an area that can be covered in two hours. Clean the used equipment with warm water.

LAYING:

Place the first tile carefully along the starting guide line 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 the guide line. Special attention should be paid to the alignment of each tile, making sure that the edges of each tile are pressed against each other. 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.

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. 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 may occur. This is a consequence of changes in interior temperature and relative 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 wellbeing, but also for your cork floor covering. When the rooms are heated during winter months, humidity is often below this range and this may lead to shrinkage of cork and the appearing of minor gaps.

PREVENTIVE CARE:

The cork floor must be kept clean. Furniture legs should have protective pads to avoid scratches. Furniture and other heavy objects must be placed carefully. Chair castors should be wide and soft. A doormat should be laid inside the front door to help protect against dirt and sand. Ensure you use nonstaining mats on the floor. Rubber, latex, plastics or other plasticizer-containing materials may cause nonreversible stain of the floor. Avoid sharp or pointed objects with concentrated weight such as high heels on your cork 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.

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CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE:

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 pH neutral cleaning product. Never use cleaning products with abrasive ingredients, solvent or ammonia based. The floor surface treatment is designed to provide wear protection for the floor covering. However, and depending on the level and intensity of traffic, 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. For the correct use follow the instructions on the packaging labels of each product, as well as the information from technical data sheets. 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 maintenance products, dirt, etc. Remove the dust by vacuuming and apply 2 coats of a recommended varnish.

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