

Grade Levels

Above Grade
On Grade
Below Grade

Pre-Installation

⚠ CAUTION: Use safety glasses and gloves when cutting this product. During the cutting process, laminate may create wood dust; be sure to install in a well-ventilated area.

OWNER/INSTALLER RESPONSIBILITY

The owner is advised to be at home during the installation for consultation/direction. The owner and installer should discuss installation and layout to maximize satisfaction. If this is not possible, consultation should be done prior to installation. Installers should be familiar with installation guidelines from North American Laminate Floor Association (nalfa.com). The owner/installer assumes all responsibility for product quality of completed installation.

PERFORM PRE-INSTALL INSPECTION. FOR CLAIMS PURPOSES, YOU ARE ALLOWED TO OPEN UP TO 4 BOXES FOR PRODUCT INSPECTION. DO NOT OPEN ALL THE BOXES. OPENING ALL THE BOXES CONSTITUTES YOUR ACCEPTANCE OF THE PRODUCT. INSPECT ALL THE PLANKS IN THESE 4 BOXES CAREFULLY. EXAMINE FLOORING FOR COLOR, FINISH AND QUALITY. IF YOU DISCOVER THAT PRODUCTS ARE DEFECTIVE, OR IF MATERIAL IS QUESTIONABLE, YOU SHOULD CONTACT THE RETAILER. IF YOU ARE SATISFIED, PROCEED WITH INSTALLATION.

Prior to installation, rack up planks from several boxes to ensure uniform distribution of colors, shades and characters in the installed flooring.

Purchase flooring to be installed in one large area at the same time. Product purchased at a later time than the first purchase may vary beyond your expectations.

Accessories, trims and moldings are manufactured to coordinate with the varied appearances of the floor planks. Any exact matches are coincidental. Non-matching accessories are not defective products.

This product is manufactured according to strict quality standards. In the event that defects are discovered in the field, the industry standards permit a defect tolerance not to exceed 5%. An additional 5% (10% for diagonal installations) should be factored in for cutting wastage and grading allowances.

During installation, inspect the planks continuously. Defects that can be seen from a standing position should be cut off or held out. Installing defective planks implies acceptance.

Squeaking and clicking noises are the result of interactions among flooring, joists and subfloors when they move. Limiting the movements of the flooring system usually eliminates most of these noises. Sometimes, it is impossible to eliminate them completely and minor squeaking or clicking noises are to be accepted as normal flooring phenomenon.

Minor scratches can generally be repaired with the use of putty, stain or filler. It is an industry standard practice of flooring installation and it should be accepted as normal by the home owner.

To assure the warranty is not inadvertently voided, before proceeding with any activity that is not covered in this manual, please contact our Customer Support Team at 800-986-3460.

ACCLIMATION AND IN-SERVICE CONDITIONS

Acclimation is the process of adjusting (conditioning) the moisture content of laminate flooring to the environment in which it is expected to perform. The laminate flooring is fully acclimated when its moisture content and dimensions (width and length) are stable. For example, the averaged dimensions and moisture content remain constant for 2 consecutive days. Flooring must acclimate for as long as necessary to reach fully acclimated stage. Acclimation time varies depending on geographical area, interior climate control and time of the year. Minimum acclimation time is 48 hours.

Elevate cartons from the floor by placing them on 2x2 in. lumber or equivalent.

Place spacers (3/4 in. to 1 in. sticks) between each layer or cross stack the layers for maximum exposure to ambient conditions. Acclimation temperature range is 60°F-80°F and relative humidity (RH) of 35%-60%. Conditions in which the floor was acclimated should be maintained continuously thereafter.

CONCRETE SUBFLOOR REQUIREMENTS

Concrete subfloors must:

Have minimum rated strength of 3000 psi.

Be level to within 1/8 in. in a 6 ft. span or 3/16 in. in a 10 ft. span; no bumps or low spots. High spots can be removed by grinding; depressions can be filled with patching compound formulated for use in floor installation.

Be clean; no construction debris, soil, mud and any other objects on or adhering to the floor; if necessary, scrape and sweep away before the installation; no protrusions of nails, debris, metals should remain.

New concrete slab must cure for at least 90 days. It must have a minimum 10 mil polyethylene sheet between the ground and the concrete.

Be free from moisture related conditions which can damage the installed flooring.

CONCRETE MOISTURE

Test all concrete subfloors for moisture content and document the results. Visual checks are not reliable.

Perform tests at locations around exterior doorways, near walls containing plumbing, near foundation walls and in the center of the room. Minimum sample size is 3 samples per 1000 sq. ft. of area and one test for every additional 1000 sq. ft. thereafter.

Moisture content should meet one of the following criteria:

Less than 5% when tested using Tramex Concrete Moisture Encounter.

Less than 316 pounds per 1000 sq. ft. per 24 hours when using Calcium Chloride test (ASTM F-1869).

Less than 2.5% when using Calcium Carbide (CM) test (ASTM D-4944-04 modified).

NOTE: Concrete moisture content may be acceptable the time of the test. These tests do not guarantee a perpetual "dry" concrete slab. The concrete slab moisture content can vary at other times of the year. We are not responsible for moisture-related damage to installed flooring.

LIGHT WEIGHT CONCRETE

Light weight concrete is concrete with a rated strength that is less than 3000 psi. Perform a quick check by drawing a nail across the top; if it leaves an indentation, it is probably light concrete.

WOOD SUBFLOOR REQUIREMENTS

The subfloor must be clean; no presence of construction debris, soil, mud and any other objects on or adhering to the floor; no protrusions of nails, debris, or metals should remain. If necessary, scrape and sweep the subfloor before the installation.

The subfloor must be structurally sound and stable; no movements or squeaks; no loose panels or loose nails; no signs of ply de-lamination or other damages. Repair all shortcomings before installation.

The subfloor must be flat; no visible bumps or low spots; the subfloor should be flat to within 1/8 in. in 6 ft. span or 3/16 in. in 10 ft. Test for moisture using a reliable moisture meter. Perform tests at locations around exterior doorways, near foundation walls, near walls containing plumbing lines and in the center of the room. Measure 20 locations per 1000 sq. ft. Moisture content of the subfloor should be less than 14%. Moisture content difference between the subfloor and flooring should be 2% or less.

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PLYWOOD OR ORIENTED STRAND BOARD (OSB) SPECIFICATIONS

On truss/joist spacing of 16 in. (406 mm) O/C or less, the industry standard for single-panel subflooring is a minimum 5/8 in. (19/32 in., 15.1 mm) CD Exposure 1 plywood subfloor panels (CD Exposure 1) or 23/32 in. OSB Exposure 1 subfloor panels, 4 ft. x 8 ft. sheets. Expansion gap between panels should be 1/8 in. (3 mm). If panels are not tongued and grooved and there is not sufficient spacing or is inadequate, cut in the required spacing with a circular saw. Do not cut in expansion space on tongue and groove panels.

PARTICLE BOARD OR FIBER BOARD

Only for floating installation.

EXISTING FLOORS

Installation over an existing floor requires the installer to consider potential issues related to moisture damage, adhesive failure and fastener failure. Contact the adhesive and fastener manufacturers respectively for their specific instructions, recommendations and requirements.

Acceptable floor coverings include: solid hardwood, vinyl composition tile, linoleum, terrazzo, ceramic tile and other "moisture sealing floors."

Unacceptable floor coverings include: carpet, needle punch felt, edge glued linoleum and other "moisture absorbing flooring."

JOB SITE CONDITION

Prior to installation, the installer must ensure that at the time of installation, the job site conditions including subfloor/substrate, ambient temperature and relative humidity, and all impacting variables will not negatively affect the floor. The manufacturer will decline responsibility for damages associated with improper installation or poor site conditions.

STORAGE AND CONDITIONS

Do not store flooring in uncontrolled environmental conditions. For example, garages and exterior patios are not acceptable areas to store flooring. Handle and unload the laminate flooring with care and store within the environmentally controlled site in which it is expected to perform. Flooring stored on a concrete slab should be elevated at least 4 in. to allow air circulation under cartons.

EXISTING HOME

An existing home should have a consistent room temperature of 60°F-80°F and relative humidity (RH) of 35%-70%. Continual deviation from these conditions will affect the dimensions of flooring. When using a heater during winter months, humidity may be much lower than the acceptable range. During the warmer months, maintain humidity levels using an air conditioner, dehumidifier, or by turning on your heating system periodically.

NEW CONSTRUCTION OR REMODEL

All work involving water, such as pouring basement concrete floors, drywall and plasterwork, plumbing, etc. must be completed well in advance of the floor delivery. Ensure that the building is enclosed. Where building codes allow, permanent heating and/or air conditioning systems should be operating at least five days preceding installation and should be maintained during and after installation. If it is not possible for the permanent heating and/or air conditioning system to be operating before, during and after installation, a temporary heating and/or dehumidification system that simulates normal living (occupied) conditions can enable the installation to proceed until the permanent heating and/or air conditioning system is fully operational. Your job site should have a consistent temperature of 60°F-80°F and relative humidity (RH) of 35%-70% which should be maintained continuously thereafter.

BASEMENTS AND CRAWL SPACES

Concrete slab or ground must be dry. The ground in the crawl spaces must be completely covered using 6 mil black polyethylene. Crawl space clearance between the earth and underside of joists should be no less than 18 in. and the perimeter vent area should be equal to 1.5% of the total square footage of the crawl space or as mandated by code.

RADIANT HEATED SUBFLOOR

This product can be installed over a radiant heated subfloor if the heating element is installed into wood or concrete subfloor. Operating surface temperature must be less than 84°F. Decrease temperature to 60°F for one week before installation in increments of 10°F per hour. Increase temperature gradually after installation in increments of 10°F per hour. Follow installation instructions for wood or concrete as outlined above.

WET AREAS

Do not install in saunas, swimming pool areas and other similar extreme wet areas. Fill all expansion gaps with water repellent sealant.

MOISTURE BARRIER AND MOISTURE RETARDER

CONCRETE SUBFLOOR

For floating installation, use 6 mil (0.006 in.) virgin polyethylene film or other means with equivalent permeability. Overlap the edge seams and tape it together. Extend moisture barrier up to the wall about 1 in. high.

WOOD SUBFLOOR

Use asphalt-saturated kraft paper or #15 or #30 felt that meets ASTM Standard D4869 or UU-B-790, Grade D. Overlap along the edge seams 2 in.- 4 in. wide. This retards moisture movement from below. Extend the moisture retarder to about 1 in. from the walls. Secure to the subfloor as necessary.

SOUND CONTROL UNDERLAYMENT


Sound reducing underlayment is required. Check with the sound control manufacturer for application guidelines. Generally, the less compressive underlayment is preferred.

EXPANSION GAP

A 5/16 in. to 3/8 in. expansion gap is required around the perimeter of the floor and between the floor and all vertical obstructions. Do not place permanently mounted structures such as kitchen counters/cabinets on the installed floor.

TRANSITION MOLDING

Floating installation, transition T-molding is required in the following cases: floor spanning greater than 30 ft. in length or width; wall openings with or without a door.

 **NOTE:** Floor areas interrupted by wall sections extending out of the wall; floor areas which are not rectangular may experience buckling or gapping if there is excessive floor expansion or shrinkage.

TOOLS AND MATERIALS BASICS

- Tape measure • Moisture meter (wood, concrete or both) • Chalk line & chalk
- Hammer • Electric power saw • Carbide tipped saw blade for fine cut
- NIOSH-designated dust mask • Hand saw or jamb saw • Eye protection
- Straight edge or Spacers • Pry Bar • Mallet • Broom • Tapping block
- Color matched wood putty • Pull bar • Sandpaper • Level • Duct tape
- Premium laminate glue • Vacuum • Caulking gun • Work gloves • Knee pads

Helpful Pointers

GENERAL TIPS

Remove all existing moldings.

Install flooring perpendicular to the direction of the floor joists. If possible, install the boards parallel to the direction of the light entering the room.

Make sure your work area is well lit. Good visibility ensures that color is consistent and that visually defective planks are detected and removed.

The minimum length of the first and last plank is 12 in.

Using a shorter piece at undercut door jams will help when fitting flooring in place.

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CUTTING THE LAST ROW TO WIDTH

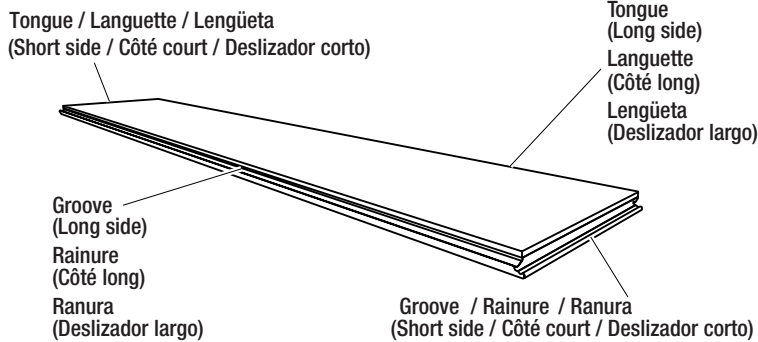
Most often the entire length of the last row will need to be cut so that it is narrow enough to fit the remaining space.

Measure the distance between the floor face edge (exclude the tongue) to the wall. Subtract 5/16 in. from this measurement for expansion gap. Draw a line. Cut through the line. Discard the excess piece. Proceed with the installation.

Preparing for Installation

Ensure subfloors are clean.

Understand the locking part of the flooring plank. The tongue is the thinner extension coming out of the side of the planks. The groove is the wider extension coming out of the other side of the floor plank.



Lay out several cartons. Randomly rack planks to ensure good color and shade mixture and end joint spacing. Minimum end stagger is 6 in. Inspect plank quality and grading.

Lay out trim moldings in advance and find planks whose shade closely matches. Set these aside for future use.

Remove the existing base, shoe molding or threshold carefully. They can be used to cover the 5/16 in. expansion gap left around the edge of the room. Undercut doors and casings using a handsaw laid flat on a piece of scrap flooring.

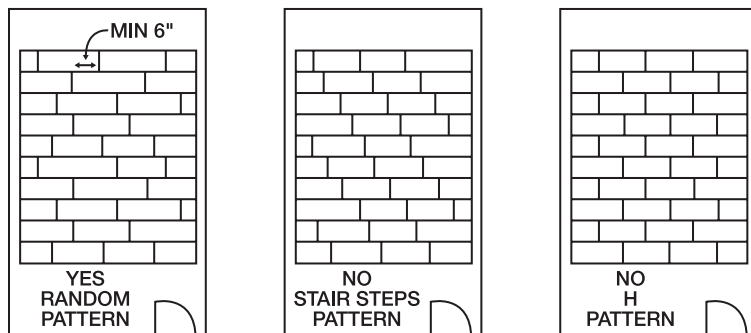
Install the underlayment according to the underlayment manufacturer instructions.

Install the underlayment in the same direction that the laminate flooring is to be installed.

Tape all seams.

Stagger end joints but avoid stair-stepping appearance by varying stagger distances between adjacent rows. Minimum stagger distance is 6 in.

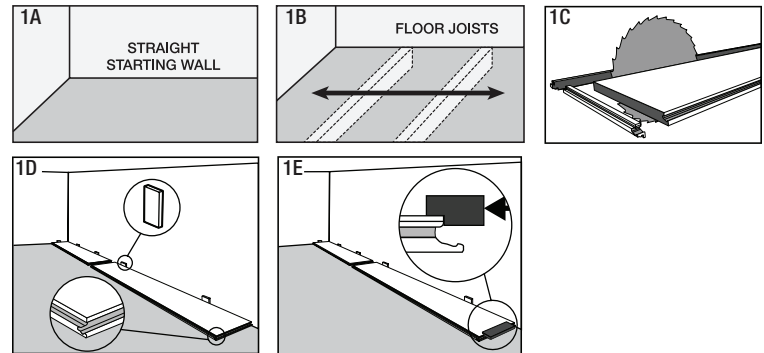
Check door clearances, making necessary adjustments before laying the floor.



Floating Installation

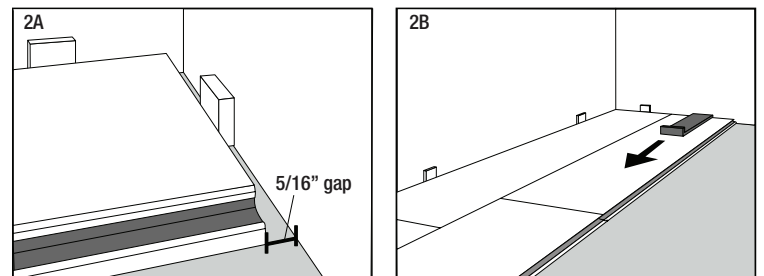
1. INSTALLING THE FIRST ROW

- When possible, begin installation from the straightest wall (Fig. 1A). If possible, install the floor perpendicular to the floor joists (Fig. 1B).
- Use a carbide-tipped circular saw blade to remove both the short and long side tongues from the plank to allow room for spacers. Do not trim the groove sides (Fig. 1C).
- Trim the long side tongue from each plank needed to complete the first row. Install the planks from left to right. Place 3/8 in. spacers between the wall and the cut edge of the planks to ensure a 3/8 in. space along the perimeter (Fig. 1D).
- Adjoin the planks by using a tapping block as shown (Fig. 1E) and gently tap until the planks are joined. Continue this process until the final plank for the row is needed.



2. COMPLETING A ROW

- When cutting a plank used for completing a row be sure to allow for the proper 3/8 in. gap once the plank is installed. (Fig. 2A)
- Use a pull bar in place of a tapping block to close the gap between the two planks to complete the row (Fig. 2B). If the remainder of the cut plank is a minimum of 12 in. long it may be used to start the next row.



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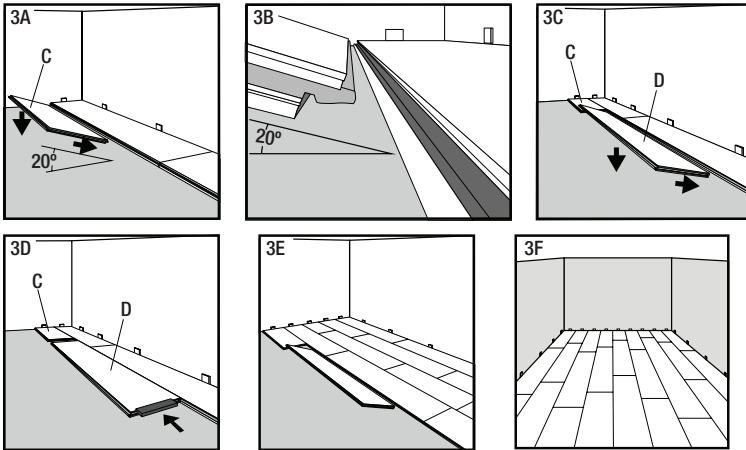
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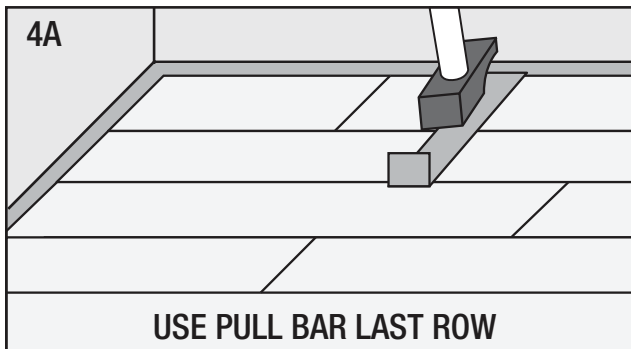
3. INSTALLING THE SECOND AND REMAINING ROWS

- Begin installing the second row by angling the plank to allow the tongue to slip into the groove of the plank in row 1 (Plank C, Fig. 3A). Maintain inward pressure (towards the previous row) while gently moving the plank up and down as you slowly push the plank to the floor (Fig. 3B). Do not force the plank to the floor if the tongue is only partially inserted into the groove.
- Install the next plank by placing it near the previous plank in the row and laying it flat to the floor while leaving a small gap (2-3 mm) between the short ends of planks D and C (Fig. 3C).
- Once the plank is lying flat, gently tap the plank as described at the end of step 2 to join planks C and D (Fig. 3D).
- Placing the tapping block no closer than 8 in. from either end, tap lightly along the long side to ensure the joint is fully seated and no gaps exist. (Fig. 3D) **Note: Uneven tapping or use of excessive force may damage the joint.**
- Continue laying the floor from left to right, as described in the previous steps (Fig. 3E). Remove the short side tongue from any full planks used in starting a new row.
- Trim the planks to be used in the final row to the desired width while taking into consideration the necessary gap of 5/16 in. needed between the planks and the wall. Install the final row as described in the previous steps (Fig. 3F).



4. INSTALLING THE LAST ROW

Use the pull bar to draw the last row to fit tightly to the previous row (Fig. 4A).



4. FINISHING THE INSTALLATION

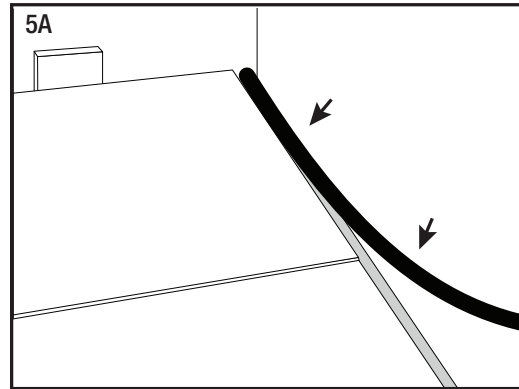
Remove all spacers (Fig. 5A).

Create a watertight seal by first filling the entire expansion perimeter, T-molding spaces, and other open areas with 3/8 in compressible PE foam backer rod (Fig. 5A).

Next cover the backer rod and any remaining gaps with 100% silicone sealant. **DO NOT** use acrylic sealants.

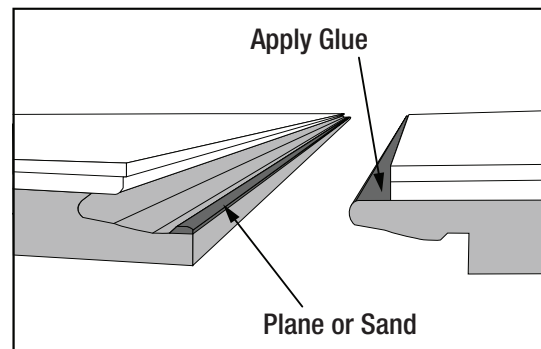
Prior to installing the molding, apply silicone sealant to the portion of the molding or transition that will contact directly with the laminate flooring surface. Install moldings and immediately wipe away any excess silicone sealant. Apply silicone sealant at connections to door frames, T-Joint moldings, or any other fixed objects.

Install moldings and immediately wipe away any excess silicone sealant.



INSTALLING AROUND MOLDINGS AND DOOR JAMBS

In challenging areas such as door moldings where planks can't be installed at an angle it may be necessary to modify the joint. Begin by removing a portion of the groove from the planks being fitted to in the previous row by either planing or sanding. Once the material is removed apply a small amount of laminate glue to the top of the subsequent plank's tongue and install it by sliding it on the floor into place. Wipe up excess laminate glue with a damp cloth and warm water.



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Completing the Installation

Clean the floor.

Use matching putty where necessary.

Install or reinstall all wall trim pieces. Nail them through the wall, but not to the subfloor to avoid restricting the expansion gap.

Install transition trim pieces. Nail them to the subfloor, not the flooring.

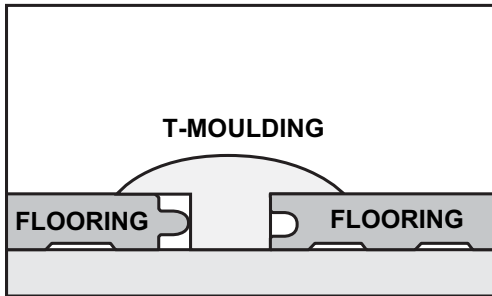
At doorways, transitions should be used to protect the edges of the floor and to provide a decorative transition from one floor type to another.

If the floor is to be covered, use a breathable material such as cardboard. Do not cover with plastic.

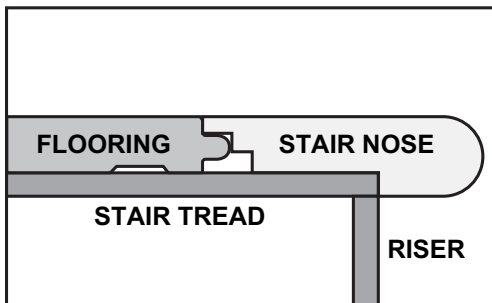
Accessories

Pictures are for general illustrative purposes only. Actual products may differ from picture.

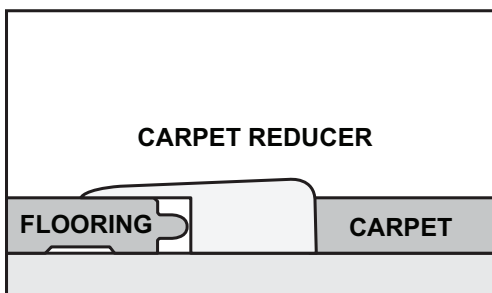
T-Molding: Used to create a transition between floor coverings of similar heights or to cover an expansion gap.



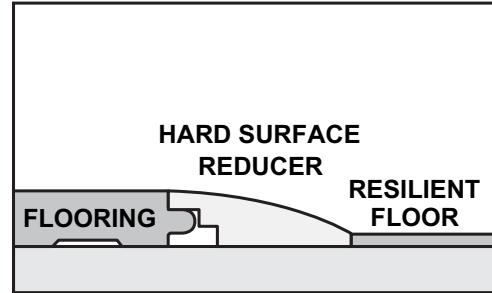
Stair Nose: Used in conjunction with flooring installed on stair steps or finished edges of a higher level floor like in a sunken living room.



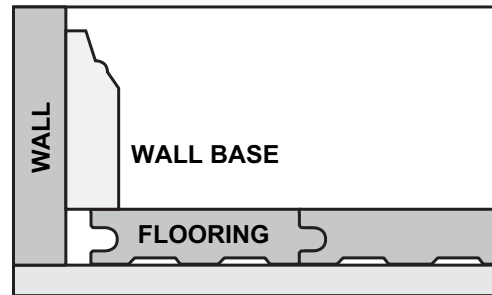
Carpet Reducer (also called Baby Threshold or End Cap): Used to transition floor coverings of differing heights. This reducer strip is also commonly used to border a fireplace, sliding glass door and other exterior door jambs.



Hard Surface Reducer: Used to transition to another hard surface flooring of different heights such as tile, vinyl, or concrete.



Wall Base: Used to give a finished look at the base of the walls. It can be used with or without Quarter Round.



Quarter Round: Used to cover the expansion space between the wall base and your flooring. It can also be used to make smooth transitions between the floor and cabinetry. It can be used with or without wall base molding.

