



FREE HOMEOWNER PLANNING GUIDE

Residential Flooring Guide

Choose a floor by starting with the structure, moisture, room use, and transitions beneath and around it.

USE THIS FOR

Better questions, clearer scope and more useful early conversations.

KEEP IN MIND

Every property, permit path and existing condition requires project-specific verification.

For homeowners comparing hardwood repair or refinishing, engineered wood, luxury vinyl, laminate, tile, carpet, or other flooring for one room or a connected level.



START WITH PURPOSE

Good planning makes the unknowns visible.

How to use this guide

A finished floor is only as reliable as the surface below it. Flatness, movement, moisture, damaged subfloor, concrete condition, underlayment, height transitions, and room exposure must be understood before material is ordered. Product labels do not solve an unsuitable substrate. Use this guide to prepare for a useful conversation, not to diagnose the house from a distance. Write down assumptions as assumptions. When new information changes the plan, ask for the scope, cost, and schedule effect in writing before work continues whenever practical.

Six principles to carry through the project

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| 01 Define the result before the products. A strong brief describes what daily life should improve, what must remain, and which compromises are acceptable. | 02 Compare scopes, not just totals. Two proposals can look similar while assigning demolition, permits, protection, selections, restoration, and unknowns very differently. |
| 03 Make decisions in dependency order. Layout and performance choices come before finishes; products that affect rough-in or fabrication must be known before those steps are released. | 04 Treat unknowns honestly. Visible conditions, reasonable expectations, and concealed possibilities are different categories. Investigation can reduce uncertainty, but some conditions remain unknowable until opening. |
| 05 Protect quality beneath the finish. Structure, water control, fire and life safety, utility work, ventilation, and manufacturer requirements should not be traded away for a cosmetic upgrade. | 06 Keep one current record. Consolidated decisions, drawings, selections, questions, approvals, and changes help the homeowner and every trade work from the same information. |

Planning boundary: This document supports early discussion and decision-making. It is not a site assessment, permit decision, engineering review, estimate, contract, or substitute for manufacturer instructions.

THE PROJECT PATH

Decisions should create useful outputs.

01 Room use and performance goals

List traffic, pets, children, shoes, spills, sunlight, rolling loads, acoustics, comfort, cleaning habits, and expected years of service.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Rank appearance, repairability, water tolerance, sound, softness, maintenance, and investment priorities.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

A performance brief for each room and connection zone.

02 Existing floor and substrate review

Identify existing layers, transitions, squeaks, movement, uneven areas, moisture signs, heat, stairs, trim, doors, cabinets, and suspected hazardous materials.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Approve testing, small openings, or specialist evaluation when the assembly is unknown.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

Condition map, measured areas, transition list, and investigation plan.

03 Material and system selection

Compare products using actual installation instructions, room suitability, wear surface, refinishing potential, pattern, plank or tile size, underlayment, adhesives, and maintenance.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Choose the floor system, color or lot, layout direction, and performance trade-offs.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

Specified product system with samples, installation method, and care expectations.

04 Preparation and transition planning

Define removal, disposal, moisture work, grinding, patching, leveling, subfloor fastening or replacement, stair details, door cuts, base, thresholds, and appliance movement.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Approve the visible transition and trim approach and understand preparation allowances.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

Preparation scope, floor-height strategy, trim plan, and known tolerances.

THE PROJECT PATH

Decisions should create useful outputs.

05 Pricing, ordering, and acclimation plan

Confirm quantities, waste basis, batch or lot needs, delivery, storage, environmental conditions, furniture logistics, and cure or acclimation requirements from the selected system.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Approve order quantity, spare material, owner responsibilities, and room access schedule.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

Material order, logistics plan, documented scope, and installation sequence.

06 Preparation and installation

Protect the route, remove defined materials, verify the exposed substrate, complete approved corrections, check conditions, then install to the specified layout and method.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Review newly exposed conditions before added repair or installation proceeds.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

Prepared substrate, recorded checks, installed field, and coordinated transitions.

07 Finish, cure, and handoff

Complete sanding or coatings where included, base and transitions, touch-up, cleaning, and protection; review cure time, furniture return, rugs, pads, cleaning, and humidity.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Inspect the floor under normal light and follow return-to-service guidance.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

Completed punch list, care instructions, warranty information, and labeled spare material.

Before construction is released

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| ☐ Current drawings and written scope agree | ☐ Permit, inspection, and consultant paths are identified |
| ☐ Approval roles and communication channel are clear | ☐ Long-lead status and decision dates are visible |
| ☐ Critical selections and owner-supplied items are documented | ☐ Site logistics, protection, and change approval are understood |

SCOPE, COST AND TIME

Compare what is included—not just the total.

Existing assembly

- ☐ Finish material, underlayment, subfloor or slab, joists where relevant, prior patches, adhesives, and fasteners
- ☐ Flatness, level expectations, movement, squeaks, damage, moisture, heat, sunlight, and room exposure
- ☐ Transitions, stairs, doors, trim, cabinets, appliances, floor registers, and adjacent fixed finishes

Preparation and installation

- ☐ Protection, furniture and appliance responsibility, removal, disposal, hazardous-material screening, and dust control
- ☐ Moisture testing or mitigation, grinding, patching, leveling, fastening, repair, replacement, and approved tolerances
- ☐ Underlayment, sound or thermal requirements, layout, pattern, expansion, adhesive or fastener system, and manufacturer instructions

Finish and handoff

- ☐ Sanding, stain, coating, cure conditions, tile grout or sealant, carpet seams, base, shoe, thresholds, and touch-up
- ☐ Cleaning, return of furnishings, appliance connections, door adjustment, and protection after installation
- ☐ Care guide, approved cleaners, humidity guidance, warranty records, spare material, and final review

What commonly moves budget or schedule

Preparation extent

Grinding, patching, leveling, moisture work, subfloor repair, and fastening may only be fully known after removal.

Material and installation method

Solid, engineered, floating, glue-down, nail-down, tile, resilient, and carpet systems have different labor and substrate needs.

Pattern and layout

Herringbone, borders, large tile, long planks, direction changes, stairs, and intricate cuts increase planning and waste.

Transitions and continuous areas

Matching heights and appearance across rooms, cabinets, stairs, and fixed thresholds can broaden the scope.

Moisture and environment

Concrete, below-grade rooms, wet areas, humidity, sunlight, and radiant heat affect product suitability and sequence.

Occupied-home logistics

Furniture, appliances, room-by-room movement, dust, odors, cure time, and protected access can extend duration.

Existing material removal

Multiple layers, stubborn adhesive, tile mortar, staples, and disposal requirements change effort.

Repair versus replacement

Hardwood refinishing, board replacement, color blending, and matching existing profiles require different skills and expectations.

BEFORE WORK BEGINS

Prepare the household and the decision path.

Homeowner preparation

- ☐ Choose one or two household decision-makers and agree on how approvals will be given.
- ☐ Create a short priority list: must solve, would like, and can wait. Use it when scope or budget choices compete.
- ☐ Gather surveys, plans, past permits, product records, repair history, and any photos of earlier work.
- ☐ Remove valuables and fragile items; discuss furniture, artwork, window coverings, and stored belongings before mobilization.
- ☐ Plan for children, pets, parking, deliveries, work hours, bathroom access, and any needed temporary kitchen or living setup.
- ☐ Tell the team about alarms, gates, neighbors, HOA rules, home-office hours, allergies, or access restrictions.
- ☐ Keep project decisions in the agreed system rather than splitting them across texts, calls, and side conversations.
- ☐ Expect some disruption. Decide in advance when you need notice for noisy work or utility shutoffs.
- ☐ Photograph furniture and room setup, empty cabinets that rest on movable furniture, and secure fragile wall items where vibration is expected.
- ☐ Confirm where delivered flooring may be stored under the conditions required by the selected manufacturer.

Questions worth asking

- 01** Who will be the day-to-day contact, and how often will we receive progress updates?
- 02** What is included, excluded, allowed for, owner-supplied, or still awaiting a decision?
- 03** Which drawings, engineering, permits, inspections, or specialist reviews are likely to be required?
- 04** How will concealed conditions be documented, priced, approved, and scheduled before added work begins?
- 05** Which selections have long lead times, and what are the decision deadlines?
- 06** How will occupied areas, pets, children, furnishings, landscaping, and daily access be protected?
- 07** How are schedule changes communicated, and what owner decisions could affect the critical path?
- 08** What quality checks occur before framing, waterproofing, wiring, plumbing, or other concealed work is covered?
- 09** Who coordinates trade partners and confirms that their work is ready for the next trade?
- 10** What permits, manuals, warranties, finish records, and maintenance guidance will be provided at handoff?
- 11** What substrate testing and preparation are included, and what conditions would become added work?
- 12** How will transitions, stairs, trim, doors, appliances, and matching to existing floors be handled?

PAUSE, VERIFY AND FINISH WELL

Quality includes what happens before and after the visible work.

Red flags and unresolved unknowns

- ☐ A price presented as final before the existing conditions, design, selections, and scope boundaries are understood.
- ☐ A proposal that omits protection, demolition disposal, permits, supervision, finish restoration, or final cleanup.
- ☐ Pressure to start demolition while drawings, key selections, or responsibility for open items remain unclear.
- ☐ Verbal changes with no written description of added scope, price, and schedule effect.
- ☐ No clear plan for dust, noise, temporary utility interruptions, weather exposure, or safe homeowner access.
- ☐ Assurances that hidden areas are fine without investigation, documentation, or an appropriate contingency plan.
- ☐ Products chosen for appearance without checking substrate, exposure, maintenance, installation, or warranty requirements.
- ☐ No defined inspection hold points before important concealed work is covered.
- ☐ Material ordered before checking substrate condition, floor heights, room exposure, and installation requirements.
- ☐ Promises that an uneven or damaged floor will be perfect without defining tolerances, testing, and preparation scope.

Closeout and handoff

- ☐ Walk every work area in good light and record remaining items in one shared punch list.
- ☐ Confirm that required final inspections and permit signoffs are complete or that any open item is clearly assigned.
- ☐ Operate doors, drawers, windows, fixtures, lights, fans, controls, appliances, and safety devices included in the work.
- ☐ Review cleaning, curing, ventilation, seasonal adjustment, and maintenance instructions before normal use.
- ☐ Collect approved plans, permits, inspection records, manuals, warranties, finish schedules, paint colors, and spare materials.
- ☐ Photograph shutoffs, access panels, concealed blocking, and key rough-in locations when documentation is available.
- ☐ Confirm the final change-order record, owner-supplied item status, and any remaining delivery or service appointment.
- ☐ Check that debris, temporary protection, keys, access codes, and contractor-owned materials have been addressed.
- ☐ Understand who to contact for a question, warranty concern, or urgent issue after completion.
- ☐ Store the closeout package with the home's permanent records for maintenance and future resale.

Professional verification: Flooring products and adhesives have specific substrate, moisture, temperature, humidity, ventilation, and installation requirements. Follow the selected manufacturer's current instructions and use qualified testing or remediation professionals where needed. Do not sand, grind, or remove suspect asbestos- or lead-containing materials without proper evaluation.

Start with an honest conversation.

Start below the sample board. Ideal Construction & Renovation can review the existing floor, identify preparation and transition questions, and help build a flooring scope that fits the home and everyday