

RUBBER FLOORING

Installation and Maintenance Guidelines

Preparation of sub-floor

The quality of the sub-floor determines the quality of the finished job. Preparation of the sub-floor is therefore, of paramount importance.

- The sub-floor surface must be dry and clean (free from dust, oil, grease, loose material etc.) and level (free from cracks, indentations etc.)

Before laying the flooring, check the following

- Check for dampness:
- Ideally, a hygrometer should be used. If the hygrometer reading shows that the relative humidity of a small volume of air in equilibrium with the surface of the base (but isolated from the air of the room) is 80% or less, the base can be considered sufficiently dry to receive the flooring. The procedure consists in setting the hygrometer on the base and taking a number of readings at four hourly intervals.
- A similar, and effective method is to lay down salt on the base and cover it with a glass. If the salt does not dissolve in less than 48 hours, the base can be considered sufficiently dry to receive the flooring.

The rubber flooring should not be laid on a sub-floor unless it is dry.

The following points should be brought to the attention of the builder/architect/owner:

- All concrete floors in contact with the ground should be adequately damp proofed, as a precaution against rising moisture. A damp proof membrane/bitumen mastic should be laid over the sub-floor and covered with a cement concrete screed. The rubber flooring should not be laid directly over the bitumen mastic.
- The screed must be left to dry for about 4 weeks during summer and for 6 weeks during winter.
- Check for cleanliness of sub-floor:
Clean the surface free from dust, wax, grease, plaster, paint etc.
- Check for smooth and level surface:
Check at several points, using a 2 metre steel ruler or a 2m spirit level (deflection less than 1 mm) or a 0.20 m spirit level (deflection less than 1 mm).

For minor imperfections in smoothness, or level, of a surface, smoothing compounds based on cement can be used. For major defects, it may be necessary to hack the surface and then bring to an even level with a screed bed of, at least, 25mm thick.

If the concrete surface is exceptionally smooth, it can be etched with a 15% solution of muriatic acid/water, then rinsed with clean water (with a little ammonia) before laying the flooring.

The following special precautions should be followed in respect of:

Timber floors

New timber floor should be constructed with tongued and grooved boarding, adequately ventilated to prevent dry rot. There should not be any gap between the planks. Plywood, if used as a base, should be of moisture proof grade.

Existing timber floors, if badly worn and not smooth, should be repaired and brought to an even and smooth surface. Badly worn floors should be levelled and smoothed with a filling of bitumen mastic, or other suitable material, and covered with an underlay fixed with an adhesive, or covered with plywood.

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Adhesive

Good adherence of the rubber flooring to the sub-floor depends on the quality of the adhesive and the skill of the laying operating in applying.

Choice of the Adhesive

- For normal duty, indoor application, a synthetic rubber based adhesive (commonly referred to as 'Neoprene' adhesive is recommended.
- If the flooring is meant for use in damp conditions or for extremely heavy duty applications, an epoxy adhesive is recommended.
- Names of some manufactures of adhesive are given in the attached.

Surface preparation

- Before applying the adhesive, made sure that the sub-floor is even, clean (free from dust, oil, grease and other foreign particles) and dry. Clean the sub-floor with a dry cloth.
- Ideally, laying under high humidity conditions should be avoided. If the floor has to be laid under such conditions, take care to ensure that condensation does not take place on the surface of the adhesive.

Adhesive application

- Store the adhesive and flooring together in the room where they will be used, for 48 hours. This is necessary because adhesives are very sensitive to ambient conditions.
- Mix the adhesive well, stirring right to the bottom of the container
- Select the right amount of adhesive, avoiding excess quantity or insufficient amount of adhesive. Consult the manufacturers of the adhesive regarding the coverage per litre of their adhesive.
- Decant the required quantity of adhesive and close the lid of the adhesive container (to avoid exposure to the atmosphere).
- The adhesive should then be applied, both, to the back of the rubber flooring sheet and the sub-floor using a notched trowel or stiff brush.

Apply the adhesive, first to the rubber sheet and then to the sub-floor. If the floor area is large, two people may be employed to apply the adhesive simultaneously on both surfaces.

Metal floors

- The surface should be smooth.
- Screws, bolts etc., should be of the countersunk type; if they project above the surface, the metal floor should be covered with a base, to bring the entire floor to one level, before the rubber flooring is laid. The metal floor should be free of rust and a rust proof coating should be applied before the flooring is laid.

PVC floors

- If the base is a PVC flooring, it should be removed and the sub-floor thoroughly cleaned and smoothed.

Ceramic floors

- Ceramic tile should be solidly adhered. Any loose tiles must be removed.
- Clean thoroughly to remove all soil, grease, wax etc.
- Apply a thin coating of approved floor levelling compound to ensure a "key".

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Installation of Tiles

Preliminary steps:

- Please read carefully, and apply, the recommendations given in the preceding sections of this manual (Preparation of sub-floor, and Adhesive)
- The sub-floor should be dry, clean and free from grit and dust particles. If possible, vacuum cleaning should be done.
- Employ skilled workers, under efficient supervision, for laying. You will then get the full benefits offered by the flooring material.
- Laying work should start after completion of plastering, painting, electrical and decorative finishing works. This will avoid accidental damage to the flooring.
- Before laying, examine the production lot numbers which appear on the carton. It is preferable to allot the same lot numbers to one area.
- The layout of the rubber flooring on the area to be covered should be marked with guidelines. Lay the rubber flooring for trial (without using adhesive) according to the required layout.
- Preferably start laying the tiles from the centre of the room. Draw a line, using a chalk line, connecting the two smaller sides of the room, centre to centre. Find the centre of the line, and with a tile, which will be used as a square, draw a perpendicular using the steel ruler alongside the tile. Having found the centre of the room, define the position of the first tile, ensuring the least possible waste on each side.

NB: This is a general recommendation. Conditions "on the ground", may dictate starting from an area other than the centre. However, ensure that the stud pattern in any direction is parallel to the wall in the same direction.

The laying operation:

- Avoid traffic on the sub-floor during the laying process.
- Lower, the tile in position and press firmly onto the adhesive. Do not slide the tiles.
- Lay the tiles close to each other, with the minimum gap between them, removing the air while they are being laid, by pressing down gently on the tile.
- Roll the tiles with a light (approx 5kg) wooden roller immediately after laying and then re-roll after 1 hour.
- Check the work constantly against the guidelines to ensure that the edges of adjacent tiles meet accurately.
- Any undulation on the tile surface should be rectified immediately by removing and relaying the tiles, after thoroughly cleaning the underside of the affected tiles. Remove, completely, the adhesives applied earlier in such places, using proper solvents, clean the surface to remove traces of solvents used.
- Any adhesive on the surface of the rubber flooring should be removed as work proceeds; avoid smearing adjacent surfaces.
- A skirting, preferably made from rubber, should be fixed to cover or mask the joint between the rubber flooring and the wall surface.

- Do not use the flooring for a period of 48 hours after laying.
- Before use, clean the floor surface with a wet cloth soaked in warm soap solution.
- After applying the adhesive, wait for it to dry, till it is "tacky" to the touch, but does not mark the fingers. The time taken for the adhesive to become "tacky" is known as the waiting time (also known as solvent drying time or adhesion time). During the waiting time, most of the solvents evaporate, allowing proper adhesion to develop. Do not start laying the tiles until the waiting time is over.

The waiting time depends on the atmospheric conditions. If the weather is hot and dry, it will be shorter than when it is cold and damp. Generally, the waiting time varies between 5 – 15 minutes, however check with the manufacturer of the adhesive regarding the waiting time for his product.

Tile placement:

- After the waiting time is over, the flooring sheet should be carefully placed in position from one end onwards, slowly, so that the air is completely squeezed out between the sheet and the sub-floor ensuring proper contact between the material and the adhesive. Lower the sheets into position and press firmly onto the adhesive. Do not slide the sheets in, as this will result in the adhesive being squeezed up between the joints.
- Sheets should be laid edge to edge to ensure minimum gap between joints.
- Smooth the flooring down with a cloth and then immediately roll, using a light wooden roller. Re-roll after one hour.
- Care must be taken to see that the laying is done within the **working time** of the adhesive. The working time (also known as tack retention time or application time) begins at the end of the waiting time and finishes at the end of **open time**, i.e. when the adhesive hardens losing its tackiness and adhesive power.

The working time generally varies between 20 to 25 minutes, depending on the atmospheric conditions. However, consult the manufacturer of the adhesive regarding the working time for his product.

Putting into service

Do not use the floor for at least 48 hours after the laying has been completed.

General precautions

- The teeth of the trowel must be in perfect condition.
- Store the adhesive in a flame-proof area, away from direct sun light.
- The working area should be well ventilated and every care should be taken not to have open flame in the vicinity.

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How to Get the Best from Rubber Flooring

Rubber Flooring is very easy to clean and maintain. Follow these simple guidelines, and your floor will remain as good as new, year after year.

- As far as possible, lay the flooring **after** construction work, such as plastering, painting, false ceiling, electrical wiring etc., is completed.
- If this is not possible, and the flooring has to be laid whilst construction work is in progress, cover the flooring with a thick plastic sheet or similar covering. This will prevent dirt and debris falling on the flooring, and the resulting need to extensive cleaning, or possible damage to the flooring surface.
- Do not use the floor for at least **48 hours** after laying, to enable the adhesive to set thoroughly.

We strongly recommend the application of a polish layer approximately 72 hours after installation (to allow the adhesive to dry fully). Begin by cleaning the floor with a mop and a mild detergent solution to remove any dust/dirt and any factory release agents. Then when the floor is completely dry, apply two layers of either RENEW TD Polymer Floor Maintainer or JOHNSONS KLEAR to ensure the surface is sealed and polished to a shine. Repeat this process periodically depending on volume of traffic but in a normal domestic environment, every 3 months should be sufficient. Please contact us should you need any further information. Please note that without this treatment, the flooring could be less resistant to staining and other surface damage.

INITIAL CLEANING:

- After the floor has been laid and the adhesive set, remove the debris and loose dirt with a soft brush/broom. Then clean the floor with a 2.5% solution of a neutral detergent in warm water using a clean cloth or mop. Do not use too much water. Rinse the washing cloth in clean water before each application (Dirty water should be wrung out from the cloth into a separate pail).
- Dry as completely as possible with a clean mop to improve the sheen. If the floor is extremely dirty, allow the cleansing solution to remain for a short while before mopping.

DAILY MAINTENANCE:

- Clean the floor with a 2.5% solution of a neutral detergent in clean water using a mop or clean cloth. Do not use excessive amounts of water. Wipe the floor dry using a clean cloth or mop.
- **AVOID** the use of:
 - Soaps that are highly alkaline, or contain free alkali.
 - Pastes/powders containing coarse abrasives.
 - Scrubbing brushes.
 - Solvents.

ADDITIONAL PRECAUTIONS

- Use floor protectors (rubber castors) under furniture legs to avoid scratches.
- Use doormats at the entrance to avoid dirt and grit being carried onto the floor from outdoors.

PLEASE NOTE:

These instructions are intended as a guide only. We do not recommend our stock range of rubber flooring tiles for outdoor use as they are not designed to be UV stable - this means that they will fade and age far quicker outdoors than they will indoors. The colours may also fade over time when exposed to direct sunlight when used indoors. The rate and degree of fading will dependent upon the amount of exposure to direct light.

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