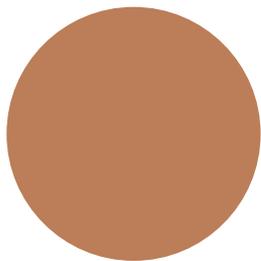
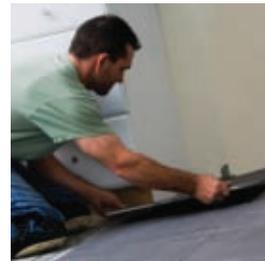
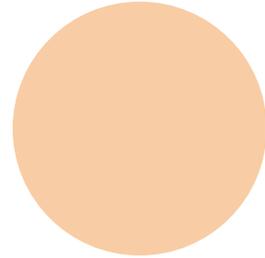
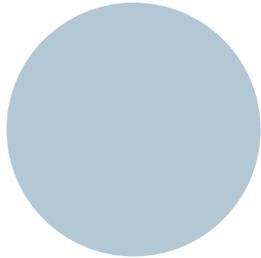


IMPROVEMENT CENTER



Guide to Subfloors

Guide to Subfloors

Just as a house needs a firm foundation, so does its floor. The performance and appearance of your floor is dependent on the quality of the subfloor beneath it. Imperfections and uneven areas in the subfloor can magnify on the surface of your finished floor and cause problems like these:

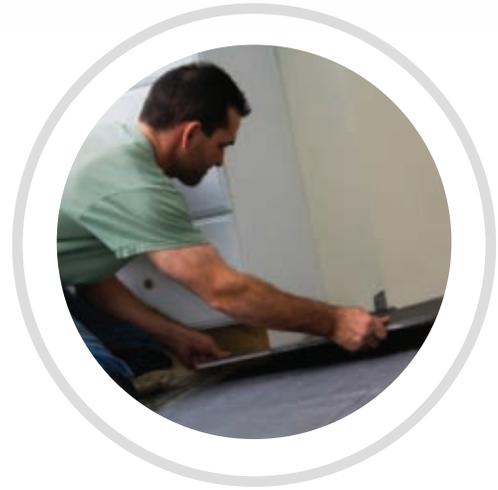
- Hardwood and laminate floors creaking and squeaking
- Tile and stone squares uneven where the edges meet
- High and low spots in vinyl flooring
- Edges of subfloor sheets and nails protruding through carpet



DIY Subfloor Preparation

The preparation of your subfloor depends on the type of flooring material you intend to use. If you are installing carpeting, the pad and the carpet itself can make up for slight roughness or imperfections in the subfloor. But hardwood, tile, stone, vinyl, and laminates require a flat, level subfloor that is free of imperfections. In addition, subfloors in areas where water intrusion may be a problem (bathrooms, laundry rooms, and kitchens) have additional requirements. Here are the steps you should take to prepare your subfloor:

1. **Clean it.** Use a shop vacuum to pick up dust and debris. Make sure to get the edges and corners clean. Remove all old paint, adhesive, and other contaminants if your subfloor is a concrete slab. If there is a lot of built-up adhesive from the previous floor, you may need to rent a floor scraping machine.
2. **Make sure it is flat.** Use a straightedge, string, or a straight two by four. A rule of thumb is that the floor should be flat to within 3/16 inch over a span of 10 feet. Use a leveling compound to fill in low areas.
3. **Take care of imperfections.** Hammer in protruding nails and fill with wood putty if you countersink them. Use wood putty to fill in cracks and crevices.
4. **Fill cracks.** If your subfloor is a concrete slab, fill in cracks with a latex compound.
5. **Prevent water damage.** In bathrooms, laundry rooms, and around kitchen sinks and dishwashers, use a cement board subfloor to prevent warping from water leaks.



6. **Reinforce when necessary.** If you are laying a heavy material such as tile or stone, make sure your subfloor is strong enough to hold the weight. It may need to be reinforced.

Contractor Considerations

If you decide to use a contractor to install your new floor, make sure to ask questions about how the subfloor will be prepared. A reputable flooring contractor should have the proper equipment to clean, scrape, and level the subfloor and should be able to perform any repair work or reinforcement required.

Whether you do it yourself or hire a contractor, the quality of your final flooring installation can only be as good as the subfloor that supports it.

