

Installing Strip Flooring

Just about every carpenter takes on the task of strip-flooring installation at some point in his or her career. It requires a few basic tools and a good strategy. *JLC* has published many articles on the topic over the years, most of which were written by Howard Brickman, a professional flooring installer who teaches seminars on the topic and is featured in the photos for this article.

Flooring is often installed before baseboard, but in the project shown here, the floor is being installed in a finished room, so the flooring butts against the baseboard. If the floor were being installed first, it would simplify the project, but you would still have to run a string line to keep the first board straight.

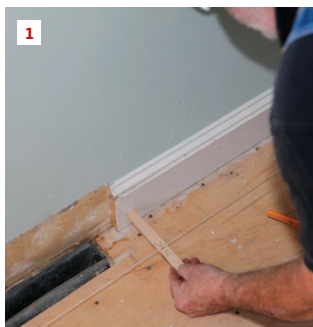
Before you begin. Start by checking the moisture content of the flooring and the subfloor with a moisture meter. If both are 10% or less, you will be fine. Next, check the floor with a straight-edge. It should be flat to within 1/4 inch in 8 feet.

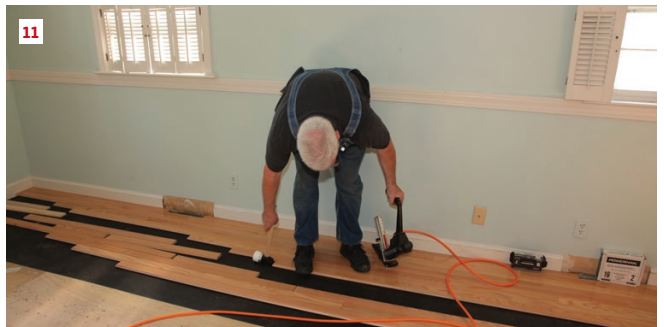
Mark the joist locations along the longest wall. The flooring should always be installed perpendicular to the framing. Note that the flooring is installed over asphalt-impregnated felt paper—not rosin paper.

Start straight. It's imperative that the starting course be dead straight. This is accomplished by measuring from the baseboard out 4 inches at each end wall and stretching a string. Use a scrap to check the distance from the string to the baseboard or wall, and note the point where the string is farthest away from the wall. Then screw plywood guides to the floor at a distance described in the photos below. After this, it's a matter of using the guide to help you scribe the first course made from perfectly straight stock, and installing the first board.

The photo progression on the following pages shows the rest: the field installation followed by the tricky steps of installing the last board.

Critical first course. Start by stretching a string 4 inches from the longest wall. Then measure to the wall **(1)** and at the farthest point, measure the width of a flooring board plus the scribe block. Using a notched stick to measure from the string, screw a guide to the floor at that distance **(2)**. Put the first board against the guide and scribe the edge **(3)**. Cut to the scribe line with a sharp plane **(4)**. The first course goes down with construction adhesive **(5)** and hand-nailing **(6)**.





Playing the field. Distribute, or “rack,” strips on the floor to prevent butt joints in adjacent courses from being too close together (7). To rack the ends, set strips that are slightly too long in place for each course (8). Installing each piece requires four steps that are repeated: First, slide a strip against the previous course with your foot (9). Next, tap the strip into place lengthwise with a rubber mallet (10). Then tap the end to engage the butt joint (11), and finally, nail each piece into place (12).



Completing each course. At the end of each course, mark the length (13), square the mark over (14), and cut the strip to length. **Fitting around jambs.** At intersecting walls, measure and notch the strip to fit around the door jamb (15). Then just tap the board gently into place (16). **Last course.** At the opposite wall, use a board and opposing wedges to tightly push the strips into place (17). A jig made from scrap scribes the final board (18), which is then planed to the scribe and installed with face nails.



For a more detailed discussion on installing strip flooring, go to
www.jlconline.com/training-the-trades/installing-strip-flooring.