Use this guide to find out how to choose your materials, prepare your subfloor, lay your laminate flooring and fit trims to finish your project.

YOUR PROJECT CHECKLIST

**MATERIALS**
- Laminate flooring
- Underlay dependant on project
- Damp-proof membrane dependant on project
- Scotia or skirting
- Threshold strips
- Wood adhesive
- Felt pads

**TOOLS**
- Flooring spacers
- Tape measure
- Fine-toothed saw or Mitre saw
- Combination square
- Drill
- Flat wood bit

**SAFETY EQUIPMENT**
- Dust mask
- Safety glasses
- Knee pads

Avoid breathing in dust when cutting wood by wearing an appropriate dust mask and wear safety glasses when using circular saws, jigsaws or Mitre saws. Wear knee pads when kneeling for extended periods. Always use an RCD device when using power tools.
Choose the right flooring and materials

1. DECIDE ON THE FLOORING TYPE & FINISH
As well as design and finish, the type of laminate flooring you choose should be influenced by where and how it will be installed. See below and Fig. 1 for a summary to help you decide. The technique to fit flooring with the Twin Clic system differs slightly to flooring with the Rapid Fit system. Rapid Fit is faster and easier to fit on your own, especially when you are covering a large area. Both are straightforward and do not need gluing or nailing (you should never glue or nail down a laminate floor).

2. SELECT THE CORRECT UNDERLAY AND DAMP-PROOF MEMBRANE
Selecting the right underlay and damp-proof membrane (DPM) for the type of flooring and room setting is crucial. Never use carpet underlay under laminate flooring. Carpet and vinyl flooring will need to be lifted before you lay your floor. See “Prepare the subfloor” on the page opposite and Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 for a guide to suitable options. If in doubt seek further advice.

3. DECIDE ON THE TRIMS YOU NEED

Skirting or scotia
There are two options when it comes to the finish around your floor: skirting or scotia. Using skirting will give the most professional finish, but you will need to lift existing skirting before you install your flooring. You can either reinstall it afterwards or replace it with new skirting (skirting needs to be at least 15mm thick in order to cover expansion gaps). Using scotia is an easier option as it fits directly against existing skirting.

Threshold strips and pipe surrounds
At door openings you should use a matching threshold strip to cover expansion gaps and neatly finish the flooring. In situations where the floor is longer or wider than 8 metres, perhaps where a living room and dining room are open plan, you should leave an intermediate 10mm expansion gap at a suitable location, and cover it with a flat threshold strip. Fit pipe surrounds to neatly cover gaps around radiator pipes.

4. CALCULATE HOW MUCH FLOORING, UNDERLAY AND TRIM YOU NEED
Multiply the maximum length of the room by the maximum width to get the area in square metres and add 10% to allow for wastage. Always round up the number of packs you purchase. Don’t forget to take into account any chimney breasts when calculating the length of skirting or scotia you will need.

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**Fig. 1 Choosing the right kind of flooring**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FLOORING TYPE</th>
<th>GUARANTEE</th>
<th>SUITABILITY</th>
<th>INSTALLATION METHOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laminate 6 &amp; 7mm</td>
<td>10-12 years</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laminate 8mm</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laminate 12mm</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Only tile effect 8mm laminate can be used in kitchens and bathrooms.*

**Fig. 2 Choosing the right damp-proof membrane and underlay**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHICH ROOM?</th>
<th>TIMBER OR CONCRETE SUBFLOOR?</th>
<th>SMOOTH OR UNEVEN SUBFLOOR?</th>
<th>APPROPRIATE UNDERLAY</th>
<th>APPROPRIATE DAMP PROOF MEMBRANE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen or bathroom</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>Smooth</td>
<td>XPS underlay</td>
<td>Bitumen-backed building paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uneven</td>
<td>XPS underlay</td>
<td>Bitumen-backed building paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>Smooth</td>
<td>High performance underlay</td>
<td>Already built into high performance underlay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uneven</td>
<td>XPS underlay</td>
<td>1000 gauge membrane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other living area</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>Smooth</td>
<td>Acoustic foam underlay (or Natural fibreboard underlay, but not with 6mm laminate)</td>
<td>Bitumen-backed building paper (only required if risk of moisture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uneven</td>
<td>XPS underlay (or Natural fibreboard underlay, but not with 6mm laminate)</td>
<td>Bitumen-backed building paper (only required if risk of moisture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>Smooth</td>
<td>High performance underlay</td>
<td>Already built into high performance underlay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uneven</td>
<td>XPS underlay (or Natural fibreboard underlay, but not with 6mm laminate)</td>
<td>1000 gauge membrane</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Subfloors need to be level and flat. Slight unevenness can be absorbed by thicker underlays.*

**Fig. 3 Different types of underlay**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>BUILT IN DAMP PROOF MEMBRANE</th>
<th>THICKER UNDERLAY TO ABSORB SMALL INDENTATIONS OR PROTRUSION</th>
<th>CAN BE USED IN KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS</th>
<th>SOUND DAMPENING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acoustic Foam Underlay</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>17dB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Fibreboard Underlay</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>19dB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Performance Underlay</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>19dB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XPS Underlay</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>22dB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Prepare the subfloor

All Wickes' laminate flooring can be laid on any sub-floor, timber or concrete. The subfloor needs to be flat, dry and clean.

**CONCRETE SUBFLOORS**

Check existing screeds and concrete sheets of polythene approximately 1m² can be taped to the screed and a heavy weight placed on top for 24 hours. The screed will discolour or moisture will appear under the polythene if there is any present. If this happens you should stop and seek expert advice.

New concrete floors must be completely dry; do not lay flooring onto recently laid concrete. The thickness of the concrete will determine the drying time, but in all cases a minimum of two months is required for concrete to dry thoroughly. Allow around one day per mm for the first 50mm and then ½ days for each additional millimetre of thickness thereafter.

The subfloor must be flat. If it has hollows deeper than 2mm over a 1m length, level it first using Wickes Floor Levelling Compound. Small indentations or protrusions of up to 3mm can be covered adequately by Fibreboard or XPS underlay in some cases (see Fig. 2).

Finally, lay a damp proof membrane (DPM) sheet (see Figs. 2 and 3 for a guide as to which one). Lay the membrane with taped 200mm overlaps and run it up the perimeter wall behind any skirting.

**TIMBER SUBFLOORS**

Ensure the subfloor is flat - no more than a 2mm difference over a 1m length. All floorboards should be firmly screwed down to interlock planks, making sure the row is straight and parallel with the wall.

If you are laying laminate flooring in a kitchen or bathroom you will need to apply wood adhesive to all end and side tongue and groove joints.

3mm can be covered adequately by Fibreboard or XPS underlay in some cases (see Fig. 2).

The subfloor should also be dry. The presence of moisture on a timber subfloor should be obvious to the naked eye. Replace any damp boards or timbers.

Don't use a plastic damp-proof membrane over a timber subfloor. If a moisture barrier is required - for example at ground floor level - use bitumen-backed building paper and then an appropriate underlay (see Fig. 2). Failure to protect the flooring from moisture penetration from below may lead to board expansion and distortion.

3. Lay your flooring

**BEFORE YOU START**

Leave the unopened packs of flooring lying horizontally on the floor in the room where they are to be laid for at least 48 hours so it can acclimatise to the room's temperature. Do not stack near radiators or in direct sunlight. If you want to remove the skirting then do so before you begin laying your floor.

The following steps are a good guide, but are not a substitute for following manufacturer’s instructions - please read these thoroughly before you start.

**INSTALL THE UNDERLAY (IF REQUIRED)**

Figs. 2 and 3 show the options available. Fitting is dependant on the type you choose so follow manufacturer’s instructions.

**LAY YOUR FLOORING**

1. **Start to lay the planks**

   The last row of flooring you install must be at least 100mm wide, so if you need to adjust the first row to compensate then calculate that and trim the planks accordingly before you begin.

   Planks should be laid lengthways, parallel to the longest side of the room and towards the main incoming source of light if possible. Use spacers to create a 10mm to 12mm expansion gap between the floor and the wall or skirting. Start the row by placing the plank with tongue facing the wall. Continue with the first row, using the tongue and groove to interlock planks, making sure the row is straight and parallel with the wall.

   If you are laying laminate flooring in a kitchen or bathroom you will need to apply wood adhesive to all end and side tongue and groove joints.

2. **Finish the end of the row and start the next**

   You will probably need to cut the final plank in the row to fit. Turn it face down and lay it next to the previous plank, tongue to tongue, using spacers to maintain the expansion gap with the wall. Use a square to mark a line across it in line with the end of the previous plank (see Fig. 4). Cut and position it to complete the first row. You can use the off-cut to start the next row as long as it is at least 300mm long. If the off-cut is too short then start the next row with a plank cut in half. Continue to lay planks a row at a time, making sure that joints between planks in adjacent rows are staggered by a minimum of 300mm.

3. **Cut holes for radiator pipes**

   If you have radiator pipes in the room, cut a hole using a flat wood bit and then cut away the flooring to leave a keyhole shape (see Fig. 5). Fit the plank and then carefully use wood adhesive to glue the off-cut wedge back in place behind the pipe. Before drilling, check that your pipe surrounds are big enough to conceal the edges of the hole – a 32mm diameter will often work, but might be too large for some pipe surrounds, especially if the pipe does not end up central in the hole.
4. Adjust door frames
Cut underneath the door frame with a handsaw, using an off-cut plank as a guide (see Fig. 6). Slide the flooring planks underneath. If with one end of a plank under the door frame you are unable to lift it to engage the tongue and groove, remove the tongue with a chisel (see Fig. 7), apply wood adhesive and slide into place. Make sure you maintain the expansion gap at the door threshold.

5. Lay the last row
To cut planks for the last row, lay a plank directly over the previous row. Place a third plank on top with the tongue against the spacer that meets the wall and use the edge of the plank to mark a line on the plank beneath (see Fig. 8). Cut the plank along the line, insert the plank and use a hammer and pull bar to make sure it is tightly in place.

**REMOVE SPACERS AND ADD TRIMS**
When all the flooring is laid, remove the spacers. Do not infill the expansion gaps with cork or any other material unless specified by the product instructions. Fit matching threshold strips in doorways and scotia or skirting around the perimeter of the floor to cover the expansion gaps. Fix scotia using panel pins or wood adhesive, fixed horizontally to the skirting boards, not vertically to the flooring. The flooring must be free to slide under the scotia or skirting to accommodate expansion and contraction.

**TRADING TIP:**
To avoid splitting the scotia, snip the head off one of the pins using pincers or pliers, insert the pin into the chuck of a power drill, and use it to pre-drill pilot holes.

**FINAL TASKS**
To allow doors to be opened once the flooring is installed, you’ll generally need to remove them and shave them down. You should also fit felt pads to the bottom of furniture to protect your new floor from scratches.

**NOTES**

Fig. 6 Cutting underneath a door frame
Fig. 7 Removing the tongue from flooring
Fig. 8 Cutting planks for the last row