



**You walk on  
me 365 days  
a year,  
shouldn't I  
get a little  
TLC?**

**Flooring  
Replace &  
Repair  
Service**

**White Paper**

## **You walk on me 365 Days-a-Year... shouldn't I get a little TLC? Flooring Replace & Repair Service**

Accidents do happen and sooner or later everyday wear and tear alone will cause an unsightly blemish on an otherwise perfectly good floor.

Most of these scars can be fixed in just a few hours if you have left over material on hand. Without the extra flooring, it may be difficult to find matching patch material. Manufacturers change their line of available patterns as often as couturiers. If you are ever installing a floor, make sure you keep extra material for repairs.

**The three most common types of flooring are Vinyl, Ceramic Tile, and Wood.** Everyday more **specialty flooring** comes on the market: bamboo, cork, modern terrazzo made of synthetic resins to replace the concrete component, even primed, painted and urethaned plywood is a popular choice. Traditional organic materials are also being revisited in new or easy care versions: slate, stone, granite and simple wood planks. Obviously, professionals trained in the care of these special materials should be consulted for repair and care, in addition to installation. Due to space, this paper covers some repairs of the most common three. Even with these everyday materials **professionals should be consulted and hired when the job is beyond you.** Remember, floors are expansive (not to mention expensive) areas in your home. A botched job will glare at you whenever you, your guests, or prospective homebuyers enter the room. Be very confident before you tackle any repair job. Also, the wrong tool can spoil the best of intentions. The wrong adhesives can make a permanent mess. And remember to use **professionals who specialize in the specific flooring material.** Each is installed, cared for and repaired in totally different ways. Joe, who installed your neighbor's bathroom vinyl, is not a good choice for fixing your oak dining room floor.

### **Vinyl (Self Adhesive Tile or Sheet Flooring)**

#### **Fixing Small Tears**

A pro will use a special 'seamer' that matches the brand of floor with the right chemicals. For a good DIY patch, use transparent silicone.

Cut out a little more vinyl if necessary to clean below. Fill the hole with transparent silicone caulking and then push the vinyl in flush with the top surface. The silicone may serve as filler for a dent below. Wipe off the excess and put masking tape over the patch to hold it for 24 hours. You will need to carefully scrape a bit of excess silicone after removing the tape.

#### **Replacing Damaged Vinyl Tiles**

If you find a tile that needs replacing, here's a tip to save your wrists unwanted physical stress: Blast a hair dryer at full force onto the ragged edge of the tile that's chipped. Once it heats up, press a large wood chisel into that edge to lift away the tile, and then use the chisel or a putty knife to remove any remaining adhesive. Of course, before you rip up the old piece, make sure you have a suitable replacement.

#### **Patching Sheet Vinyl**

Similar to repairing small tears, but on a larger scale.

The most difficult part of repairing a tear or hole in sheet vinyl is finding a replacement piece that matches the existing pattern. Once that's done, patching is pretty basic.

Cut the piece big enough to cover the damaged area, while matching the pattern. Firmly tape down the piece so it won't shift.

Using a sharp utility knife, firmly cut through both layers of vinyl. Use a straightedge to keep the blade **vertical** while cutting because leaning the blade may cause a gap in the patch.

Remove both pieces and the taped-on scrap. Clean out all the loose debris and scrape away any old glue.

Test fit the patch to make sure the pattern lines up and no gaps are visible. Apply silicone glue to the area with a notched glue packet (or notched trowel if the area's big enough).

Position the patch and firmly press it down into the glue using a wadded up towel. Force any excess glue toward the edges and wipe clean. Use a hand roller or rolling pin to work out any air bubbles and to seat the patch into the glue. Tape and leave it alone for 24 hours.

## **Ceramic Tile**

### **Replacing a Tile**

Start by cutting away all the grout around the offending tile. The best tool for this job has carbide cutting blade(s) and a carbide rasp to sand leftover tile adhesive. Cutting away the grout will liberate it from its neighbors. Then lift it out. It won't be stuck down because if it were, it would not make that gritty sound.

If you are trying to remove a broken tile that is stuck down, remove all the grout as before, then drill a hole and work from the center out. This will avoid bothering the neighboring tiles.

Clean off the mortar from both the floor and the tile using a carbide rasp. You could use the same thin set mortar used to install the original tile but you don't really want to buy a whole bag of this stuff for one tile. For a single tile installation you can use a tube of construction adhesive.

Choose one that will eventually set rock hard rather than remaining flexible as many adhesives do. Put in enough to fully support the tile and hold it up to the right height. If your excess oozes out into the grout area, scrape it out of the crack immediately and don't spill it on top of the tiles - it may stain the tiles and it will stain your skin, although it is non-toxic. Give it several days to set hard. Then re-grout around the tile.

## **Wood, Laminate or Hardwood**

### **Repairing a Laminate Wood Floor**

Repairing damage in a laminate floor poses a challenge, as the decoration is very thin.

You could gouge out the problem and apply hard putty. Plastic Wood won't stick well enough but you could use some non-shrinking wood fillers that are not quite as strong but take stain better, or epoxy putty that will be plenty strong enough but won't take stain well. **The real task here is not a woodworking one, but an artistic one.** With an artistic worker willing to recreate the color and grain pattern of the surrounding flooring, you can stain or paint over the filler.

Then cover that with a couple of coats of polyurethane floor finish to protect the color. It is not easy to get the color and pattern right, but it can work.

If you are more of a woodworker, you can use a router to do an inlay job. First make a U or square donut-shaped frame to control the router. Cut out a square that follows the board patterns to about half the thickness of the flooring. Square out the corners with a chisel. Then cut right through the flooring for most of the center of the patch, leaving a shoulder all around. Then cut an extra piece of the flooring to fit perfectly into the patch. You will have to cut a shoulder under this piece so that it will fit into the inlay cut and overlap on the shoulder for a gluing surface.

What is nice about this technique is that you don't have to find a piece of wood that matches as

long as you line up your cut-out with a full board or two pattern in the original floor because the new insert will simply look like another short plank in the floor. Use waterproof glue and a weight to set it in place and the patch will be invisible, although requiring some careful craftsmanship.

If you are using the **clip lock type of laminate flooring** that are not glued down nor glued together, you can simply disassemble the floor up to the damage, replace one single board and put the rest back together. This is an advantage of the clip lock system and a reason to keep a spare piece or two stored away.

### **Repairing Squeaky or Cupped Boards**

Squeaky boards are annoying, but can often be easily fixed. Try fixing them with the simplest technique: inserting a shim from below the floor, between the floor joist and the area where the floor is squeaking. Sometimes, even tapping the squeaking area with a hammer and 2 x 4 wrapped in a towel will work. Also, try squirting some lubricant such as graphite, talcum powder, floor oil, mineral oil, or wood dough between the boards. You can even try forcing metal glazier's points between the boards every 6" to separate the boards.

If these simpler techniques are not working, try drilling a pilot hole through the board, nailing from above with a finishing nail, and then countersinking the nail and filling the hole with wood dough. This technique also works for repairing cupped or warped boards. If the floor joists are exposed from below, you can drill a pilot hole up through the floor joist and/or sub flooring and 1/4" into the squeaky board. A drill bit stop will be useful here to prevent drilling through the floor surface.

Wrapping masking tape around the bit will work as a drill guide. Then you can grab the board from below with a 3/16" roundhead wood screw with a large washer. This technique of screwing the flooring from below also works when repairing cupped or warped boards. One other possible solution is to add metal joist bridging or wood blocking between the joists near the squeak. This will often stiffen the floor and eliminate the squeak.

### **Badly Warped or Cupped Floors**

Some floors may be badly warped or cupped, due to moisture. In this case it is not practical to repair each board individually. Instead, sand the entire floor down to an even level. Use your drum sander and a rough grade of sandpaper and make diagonal passes across the cupped areas until they are all smooth and level. Later you will have to sand with the grain in order to work out all the unsightly sanding marks left by the diagonal sanding.

### **Replacing Old Floorboards**

Some floorboards are beyond repair and need to be replaced. Often these pieces are under or near an old radiator that has water stained, rotted or warped the wood. Any damaged planks should be replaced before refinishing.

Most flooring has tongue-and-groove joints that interlock the planks. So use a circular saw to remove old floorboards. Cut down the length of the board in the middle, being careful not to hit any good boards.

To avoid accidentally cutting through the sub floor, set the depth of the cut at the thickness of the flooring.

Using a chisel, pry out the sliced board and debris.

Make sure the replacement board is the same size and color as the rest of the flooring.

If you are putting in more than one new board, put in the groove edge first and blind nail over the tongue with finish nails.

Saw off the bottom flange of the groove on the remaining board to be fit. This way the piece will fit firmly on top of the neighboring tongue. Use a scrap of wood to tap the ends into place.

For extra strength, add a bead of wood glue along the tongue and half groove of the last joint that's fitted.

This last strip will also have to be top-nailed. Pre-drill and anchor the strip with finish nails every 12" at opposing angles spaced 1/2" from the edge. Then countersink the nail heads and fill the holes with matching wood filler.

**A Special Note About Old Hardwood Floors:** Although this paper does not cover refinishing hardwood floors, a word of warning: before sending up clouds of sanding dust, **get it tested for lead.** Yes, before the mid-1960's lead was often added to clear wood floor finishes until urethane became more widely used.

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