



## Laminate Flooring - Drop Lock Installation Guide

*This guide is applicable to the following flooring styles:*

4001-Tobacco Barn; 11825-Natural Acacia

### **PREPARING FOR INSTALLATION**

#### **Moisture:**

- Do not install Designer Choice Laminate Flooring in bathrooms, shower rooms, or other rooms exposed to excessive moisture.
- Controlling the amount of moisture above and below the flooring will help prevent mold or mildew growth.
- Subfloors must be carefully checked for excessive moisture and any issues must be resolved prior to laminate installation. Flooring can be installed if the moisture level is under 35%. A moisture level over 55% is unsuitable for installation. A moisture meter can be used to verify humidity of the installation area.

#### **Subfloor Preparation:**

- The subfloor surface must be smooth, flat, dry, clean and solid. Carpet staples or adhesive residue must be removed to ensure proper laminate installation.
- Subfloor should be flat within a tolerance of 1/8" over a span of 4 feet. Any unevenness over 1/8" must be sanded down or filled with a floor leveler. Voids or humps in the subfloor will prevent laminate from locking properly.
- A moisture barrier must be placed under all Designer Choice flooring. Use 6 mil poly plastic sheeting with waterproof taping at all joints to ensure a proper seal. ***DO NOT use underlayment padding with pad-attached laminate flooring.***

#### **Concrete Subfloors:**

- The moisture content of concrete subfloors should not exceed 3% using a concrete moisture meter.
- A moisture barrier (poly) must be placed over all concrete subfloors to protect against any possible moisture emissions.
- ASTM f 2170 test for concrete slabs should not exceed 80% or ASTM f 1869 should not exceed 3lbs. of moisture vapor per 1000 square ft. per 24 hrs.
- New concrete floors need to cure for a minimum of 60 days prior to laminate installation.

#### **Wood Subfloors:**

- Wood subfloors should be dry with a moisture content in line with the relative humidity of the service environment.
- The subfloor must be completely stable. Any loose sections must be nailed down, and if necessary, a leveling product must be applied.
- A moisture barrier (poly) must be placed over all wood subfloors to protect against any possible moisture emissions.

#### **Purchase Enough Flooring to Complete Your Project:**

- Measure the length & width of your room to get the square footage. If the room has alcoves or offsets, measure them separately. Account for 10% extra to cover mistakes, trimming, and/or for future needs or replacement.

#### **Plan Adequately for Transitions:**

- **If installing more than 30 linear feet, or if the floor spans between two separate rooms, you must install a transition piece to ensure the floor does not separate.** Designer Choice Flooring offers a complete line of transition moldings, designed with a low profile and coordinating colors to ensure an attractive installation.

#### **Acclimation:**

- **PRIOR TO INSTALLATION, YOU MUST ACCLIMATE YOUR DESIGNER CHOICE LAMINATE FLOORING.**
- Place the flooring horizontally in the room of installation for 48 hours before installing.
- Be sure the room is climate controlled with a temperature between 65° & 85° F. Relative humidity must be between 35%-55%.
- Do not remove flooring from the box during the acclimation period.
- Ensure that the room meets all preparation guidelines for 48 hours during acclimation, throughout the installation process, and after installation is complete.
- Store flooring in the box until you are ready for installation.

*CAUTION: Do not install Designer Choice Laminate over carpet. We highly recommend you do not install in rooms or homes that are not temperature-controlled. Exposure to long-term direct sunlight can cause damage to your floor.*

## INSTALLATION

### Recommended Tools and Accessories:

1. Installation Kit (Tapping Block, Pull Bar, 3/8" Spacers)
2. Rubber Mallet
3. Dust Mask
4. Safety Glasses
5. Tape Measure
6. 3-6 ft. Straight Edge
7. Square
8. Pencil
9. Utility Knife
10. Electric Saw and/or Jigsaw
11. Effective Moisture Barrier (6 mil Poly Plastic)
12. Designer Choice Approved Underlayment (if Needed)\*
13. Moisture-Proof Tape
14. Accessories and Trims (T-Molds, Reducers, etc.)

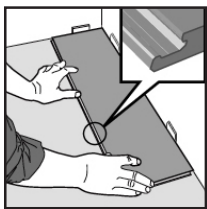
*\*DO NOT use underlayment padding with pad-attached laminate flooring.*

### Inspect Plank Appearance Prior to Installation:

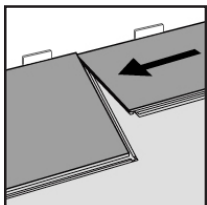
- We maintain strict quality control, but we recommend you check each plank for blemishes or flaws. Return any defective planks to your dealer for replacement prior to installation.
- THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS ARE BEYOND THE WARRANTY: MINOR COLOR, SHADE, OR TEXTURE VARIATIONS BETWEEN SAMPLES, PRINTED COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE ACTUAL MATERIAL.

*Note: During installation, please keep dust, dirt, or foreign particles away from the locking strip. The cleaner the locking strip, the better the bond between planks.*

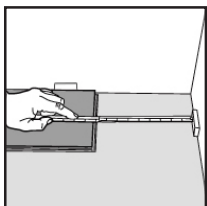
### Installation Procedure:



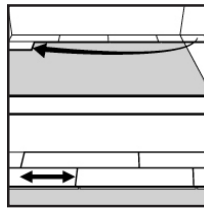
1. Place 3/8" wide spacers along the wall. Position the plank with the length of the board against the wall and the short end of the board against the spacer. You should have placed the board so that the groove sides are out and are showing. Allow a minimum gap of 3/8" (for subfloor movement or product expansion, which should be covered by moldings).



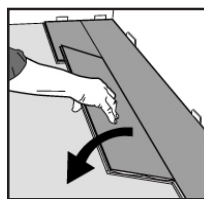
2. Place your second plank against the wall and drop the lip of the second plank onto the groove of the first plank. You should now have 2 planks tightly fitted together, both running along the same wall.  
*\*When locking the ends of the planks together, the planks may not fully lock together until you install the next row.*



3. Continue laying planks end-to-end along the wall. When you get to the final plank, cut a board to fit leaving a 3/8" gap for expansion, and place a spacer between the plank and the wall.

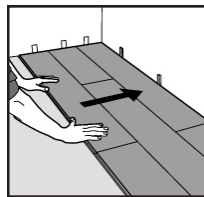


4. Begin laying your second row of planks. Make sure that there is at least 6" difference in length from the first plank you laid on the previous row. The piece that you cut at the end of your first row can generally be used at the beginning of your second row. This will maximize the locking system to give you a tight fit. Simply angle the tongue side onto the groove side, slide it up against your spacer, and drop the plank. You may need to tap the face of the plank with a rubber mallet to lock it into place.



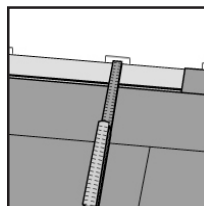
5. Install the boards in row 2 as instructed in Step 4. Place the next board tightly against the end of the previous board and drop it to lock it into place. If necessary, you can tap the board to fully lock it in.

*\*You must complete Step 4 before locking the ends of the boards together.*



6. After 2 or 3 rows are installed, you can re-position the floor to adjust the distance from the walls to ensure the 3/8" expansion gap on all sides.

7. When fitting around irregular objects, make a pattern out of heavy paper and place the pattern on the plank and trace the shape. Cut along the trace lines and lay the plank. Be sure to leave a minimum of 3/8" expansion gap around all fixed objects, floor vents, and door frames.



8. When installing the last row, the width of the boards must be at least 2" wide. Installation of the last row may require sawing the long side of the planks to fit the room. (It may be necessary to also cut the width of the first-row boards to achieve this width on the last row.) When cutting planks to size, ensure that the required 3/8" expansion gap between the plank and the wall is included in the measurement. Once the plank has been ripped (if required), repeat step 5, with the exception of using the pull bar to fit the long joint into the previous row.

*\*Upon completing the last row, you may immediately walk on your new laminate floor.*

### Completing the Installation:

- Remove all spacer blocks.
- Sweep or vacuum the floor to remove any loose dirt or debris that may have been introduced during the installation process.
- Finish the floor with trim and transition pieces as needed.  
***Do not nail, staple or adhere baseboards or quarter round to the flooring as this limits the floor's ability to float freely. Instead, attach all trim and moldings to walls or to exposed subfloor.***

## Precautions

- Dust from this product can be hazardous to your health.
- Products including fiberboard and engineered wood products produce dust when sawn, sanded, or machined. Airborne dust can cause health problems and can also be an explosive hazard.
- Power tools should be equipped with dust collectors, and precautions should be taken to prevent ignition.
- The manufacturer recommends limiting dust exposure to prevent the following health problems: eye and skin irritation, reduced lung function, asthma, and nasal cancer. Use an approved dust mask and safety glasses when sawing, sanding, or machining laminate flooring.

## Manufacturing Standards

- Resistance Rating AC3, intended for use according to utility classes 23 (Heavy Domestic) and 31 (Moderate Commercial).

## CARE AND MAINTENANCE

You have just installed laminate flooring from Designer Choice. Your new resilient floor was produced under the highest quality standards and will provide you with years of enjoyment. Please follow the recommendations in this guide to retain the fresh look and protect the factory finish of your flooring.

### DOs:

- Frequently sweep and vacuum the floor surface to remove loose dust, dirt, and debris.
- Some hand wiping or damp mopping may be required to remove tough spots and spills. Always sweep or vacuum your floor before mopping to remove loose dirt. Apply cleaner designed for laminate flooring to a cloth or mop and wipe the area. Do not apply cleaner directly to the floor. ***Please check any new cleaning agents on a small test patch of the floor in an inconspicuous area before use, and avoid using harsh cleaners or soaps.***
- To provide continued protection from abrasive dirt and debris, we recommend you utilize an effective barrier system (such as outdoor and indoor mats) to limit the amount of moisture, sand, salt, grit, and dirt that may enter the flooring area.
- Use protective felt pads under furniture legs or wide casters under appliance levelers to prolong the life of your floor and help guard against surface scratching.
- If office chairs are to be used on the floor, ensure soft casters are fitted or protective vinyl floor mats are used to protect the floor surface.

### DON'Ts:

- DO NOT use combination cleaner/finish products or soap-based detergents.
- DO NOT use steel wool or scouring pads.
- DO NOT wax your Designer Choice Laminate floor. The surface of your floor is very dense and non-porous, which prevents wax from penetrating into the flooring—creating build-up which can yellow and collect dirt. The same non-porous feature provides all the protection against wear and staining that your floor will need.
- DO NOT treat or seal your flooring after installation. Never sand, lacquer, or refinish your laminate flooring surfaces.
- DO NOT allow pets with unclipped nails to damage your floor. It may result in severe scratching to the surface. The same is true for any high-heeled shoes that do not have proper tips on the heels.
- DO NOT expose your floor to direct sunlight for prolonged periods of time. Most types of flooring will be affected by continuous strong sunlight, so use drapes or blinds to minimize sunlight exposure during peak daylight hours. Also consider relocating area rugs to avoid an uneven appearance.
- DO NOT expose your floor to excessively high temperatures. Some natural ventilation or intermittent air conditioning in vacant homes should be utilized. Long-term continuous inside temperatures over 95° F combined with strong direct sunlight will damage your Designer Choice Laminate and cause the installation to fail.
- DO NOT expose the floor to excessively high or low levels of humidity.