



## Water-Resistant Laminate Flooring - Drop Lock Installation Guide

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

AB8364-4-Cannon Point; AB8389-5-Waverly; AB8364-1-Magnolia;  
AB8389-1-Arlington

### **PREPARING FOR INSTALLATION**

Before any flooring is installed, the installer must make sure that the environment of the job site and the condition of the subfloors meet or exceed the standards and recommendations outlined in this guide. ***Failure to do so could void the warranty.***

#### **Building Conditions:**

- Prior to installation, the building must be structurally complete and enclosed. All exterior windows and doors must be installed. Any "wet" work inside the house (masonry, drywall, and paint) must also be complete – allowing adequate drying time to eliminate unnecessary moisture content within the building.
- Basements and crawl spaces must be dry. Crawl spaces must have a minimum of 24" from the ground to the underside of the joists. A vapor barrier must be put in crawl spaces with joints overlapped and taped. In addition, vents should be located throughout the foundation. They must provide good cross-ventilation and no dead air space. There must be minimum vent openings equal to 1.5% of the square footage within the crawl space. For example, 100 sq ft of crawl space must have at least 1.5 sq ft of open vents.
- Subfloors must be carefully checked for excessive moisture and any issues must be resolved prior to flooring delivery. Moisture content of subfloors must not exceed 14%. All moisture testing must be done before flooring has been acclimated 72 hours and job site requirements met. A moisture meter can be used to verify humidity of the installation area.
- Permanent HVAC (heating/air conditioning) systems must be operating for at least 14 days before installation, maintaining a constant room temperature between 60° & 80° F and a relative humidity of 35%-45%.
- Exterior drainage including gutters and downspouts must be in place and draining away from the building.

#### **Moisture:**

- Laminate flooring should be protected from moisture at all times during transportation, storage and installation. The flooring must be stored in a dry place prior to installation.

- This product can be installed on, above, or below grade.
- Special care should be taken when installing flooring in rooms prone to moisture including, but not limited to: bathrooms, powder rooms, kitchens, mud rooms, foyers, and laundry rooms. ***After installing planks in rooms prone to moisture, the installer must apply water-repellent flexible silicone sealant in all perimeter expansion joints and along all cut plank edges as outlined in the Installation Procedures in this guide. Failure to do so will void the warranty.***
- Moisture content of subfloor must not exceed 14%. All issues with excessive subfloor moisture must be resolved prior to flooring delivery at job site.

***WARNING: Neither flooring planks nor accessories are recommended for applications with extreme humidity exposure.***

#### **Subfloor Preparation:**

- Subfloor surface should be **CLEAN**: Subfloor should be scraped, sanded, or swept; free of wax, grease, paint, oil, and other debris. Carpet staples, adhesive residue, etc. must be removed to ensure proper laminate installation.
- Subfloor should be **FLAT**: Subfloor should be flat within a tolerance of 1/16" over a span of 40 inches. Any unevenness over 1/16" must be sanded down or filled with a floor leveler. Voids or humps in the subfloor will prevent laminate from locking properly.
- Subfloor should be **DRY**: The moisture content of the subfloor must not exceed 14%.
- Subfloor should be **STRUCTURALLY SOUND**: Replace any water-damaged, swollen or delaminated sub-flooring.

#### **Concrete Subfloors:**

- It is VITAL that concrete subfloors are within safe moisture parameters prior to flooring installation. There are multiple ways to test for excess moisture in concrete:
  - ASTM f 2170 test for concrete slabs should not exceed 79%
  - ASTM f 1869 should not exceed 5lbs. of moisture vapor per 1000 square ft. per 24 hr
- If the test results exceed these numbers, the concrete slab should be sealed with an appropriate sealer, such as Bostik's MVP4 (Moisture Vapor Protection) Sealer, prior to installation. ***The manufacturer is not responsible for Hydrostatic, Hygrostatic, or thermal dynamics resulting from an improper concrete slab installation.***

- A moisture barrier must be placed over all concrete subfloors to protect against any possible moisture emissions.
- New concrete floors need to cure for a minimum of 60 days prior to laminate installation, but 120 days is preferred.
- When acclimating flooring for use with concrete subfloors, be sure to provide a 4" air space between the flooring cartons and the concrete subfloor to ensure proper airflow and to prevent flooring from absorbing moisture from the concrete. ***This product must acclimate for 72 hours prior to installation following the recommendations in the "Storing and Acclimating Flooring Prior to Installation" section of this guide.***

#### **Wood Subfloors:**

- Wood subfloors should be clean and dry with a moisture content of no more than 14%.
- After acclimating and prior to flooring installation, use a reliable wood moisture meter to check the moisture content of the wood subfloor and the laminate flooring. The difference between the moisture content of the subfloor and the flooring must not exceed 5%.
- 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 must be placed over all wood subfloors to protect against any possible moisture emissions.

#### **Moisture Barrier and Underlayment:**

- A moisture barrier must be placed under all Designer Choice flooring. Use a moisture membrane with waterproof taping at all joints to ensure a proper seal. For concrete subfloors, let the moisture barrier run up the wall before cutting to size. This will be covered with moldings/trims after flooring installation is complete. For wood subfloors, cut the moisture barrier 1 inch from the wall.
- ***DO NOT use underlayment padding with pad-attached laminate flooring.***
- ***Attached pad on flooring does not act as a moisture barrier.***

#### **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 40 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.

#### **Storing and Acclimating Flooring Prior to Installation:**

- Once the building and subfloors meet all conditions outlined in this guide, the flooring can be delivered to the job site.
- Handle and unload the flooring with care and store within the area in which it will be installed for the acclimation period.
- **PRIOR TO INSTALLATION, YOU MUST ACCLIMATE YOUR FLOORING FOR AT LEAST 72 HOURS.**
- Cartons must be stored horizontally (parallel to the ground). Never store them standing on end.
- Do not remove the flooring from the box until you are ready for installation.
- The room must be climate-controlled with a temperature between 60° & 85° F. Relative humidity must be between 35%-45%.
- Ensure that the room meets all preparation guidelines for 72 hours during acclimation, throughout the installation process, and after installation is complete.
- Flooring stored on concrete floors should be elevated at least four inches to allow air circulation under the cartons.

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

*WARNING: Manufacturer is not responsible for damage caused by negligent installation practices or misuse of installation tools.*

## 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. Broom
7. 100% Silicone Sealant
8. 3-6 ft. Straight Edge
9. Square
10. Pencil
11. Utility Knife
12. Electric Saw and/or Jigsaw
13. Effective Moisture Barrier
14. Moisture-Proof Tape
15. Accessories and Trims (T-Molds, Reducers, etc.)

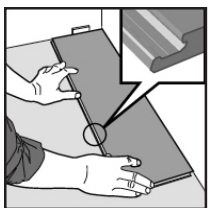
**WARNING: DO NOT use underlayment padding with pad-attached laminate flooring.**

### Inspect Plank Appearance Prior to Installation:

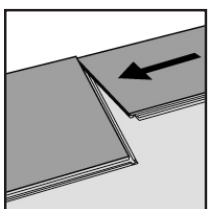
- The owner/installer assumes final responsibility for inspecting product quality. Carefully examine each board for quality, color, and finish prior to installation – using reasonable selectivity to hold out or cut off pieces with defects. If an individual piece is doubtful as to grade, color, or finish, the installer should not install that piece. **The manufacturer is not responsible for boards/floors installed with visible defects.**
- Check all planks in daylight before and during installation. **Do not use any defective planks.**
- 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.*

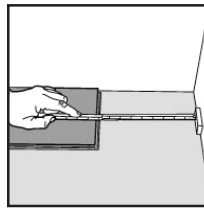
### Installation Procedure:



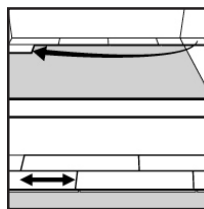
1. Place 3/8" wide spacers along the wall. Position the plank with the length of the board against the wall and the short end of the board against the spacer. You should have placed the board so that the groove sides are out and are showing. Allow a minimum gap of 3/8" (for subfloor movement or product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



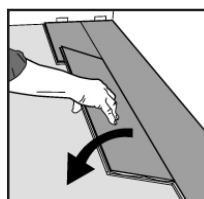
2. Place your second plank against the wall and drop the lip of the second plank onto the groove of the first plank. You should now have 2 planks tightly fitted together, both running along the same wall.  
*\*When locking the ends of the planks, they may not fully lock together until you install the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



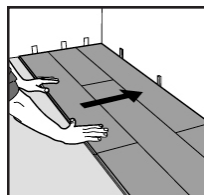
3. Continue laying planks end-to-end along the wall. When you get to the final plank, cut a board to fit leaving a 3/8" gap for expansion, and place a spacer between the plank and the wall.



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.*

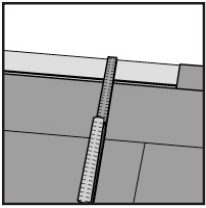


6. After 2 or 3 rows are installed, you can re-position the floor to adjust the distance from the walls to ensure the 3/8" expansion gap on all sides.

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. In rows where there is a pipe, pole, or other freestanding obstacle, make sure the obstacle falls exactly in line with the short side of two planks. Take a drill bit with the same diameter as the obstacle plus 3/8" for the expansion. Click the planks together on the short side and drill a hole centered on the joint between the two planks. Now you can install the planks in the floor. For a perfect finish around obstacles, use flexible silicone sealant.

9. When installing planks under door frames, ensure that the expansion joint under the door is at least 3/8". If you cannot lift the plank, use a tapping block or pull bar and hammer to tap the planks together with the planks flat on the floor.



10. 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.

11. ***When installing this flooring in a room prone to moisture (such as a bathroom or kitchen), a water-repellent flexible silicone sealant must be applied in all perimeter expansion joints and along all cut plank edges.*** The perimeter expansion areas as well as any expansion joints with cut edges (such as around pipes, cabinets, etc.) must be completely filled in with silicone to prevent moisture from penetrating the core of cut flooring planks. When applying sealant, it is helpful to first apply a strip of masking tape on the top surface of the flooring planks, parallel to and approximately 1/32" from the outer edge of the flooring. Then fill the expansion area with sealant, remove any excess with a plastic scraper or putty knife, then remove the tape. Let dry for 24 hours. It is important that moisture does not enter the core of any cut planks. ***Failure to follow these recommendations will void your warranty.***

*\*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.***
- In places where moldings cannot be placed, fill expansion gaps with flexible silicone sealant.

### **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.
- Water and spills must be wiped up dry immediately. Moisture that penetrates the joints of the flooring will cause damage.
- 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.***
- Remove stubborn stains carefully with acetone-based fingernail polish remover. Never use scouring products.
- 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 use any type of cleaning machine such as steam cleaners, spray mops, power cleaners or buffers.
- 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. Ensure that humidity in the room is always between 35%-45%. Use a humidifier or dehumidifier if necessary.