How to Fit Engineered Wood Flooring

Engineered wood is real wood on top and a stable layered core underneath, so it moves far less than solid wood and suits most rooms, including those with underfloor heating. This guide explains how to prepare the room and fit the floor so it looks right and lasts. It covers the most common method, a **floating click floor**, and explains when a floor should be **glued** or **nailed** instead.

> **Your pack leaflet comes first.** Every floor comes with its maker's instructions. This guide follows widely agreed industry practice; if a figure in your leaflet is different, follow the leaflet. Fitting it differently can affect your warranty.

At a glance

Difficulty	Moderate: a confident DIYer can fit a click floor; glue-down and nail-down are best left to a fitter
Time	About a day for a 20 m² room (click, floating), once the subfloor is ready
Fitting methods	Floating (click or glued tongue and groove) · fully bonded (glued) · secret nailed
Acclimatise	At least 48 hours in unopened packs, flat, in the room (2–3 days is better)
Room conditions	18–24 °C and 45–60 % relative humidity (normal living conditions), heating on
Concrete / sand-cement screed	Dry: no more than 75 % RH (hygrometer) or 2 % (carbide test)
Anhydrite (gypsum) screed	No more than 0.5 % (0.3 % with underfloor heating)
Wooden subfloor	No more than 12 % moisture
Flatness	No more than 2 mm dip or hump under a 2 m straight edge
Expansion gap	10–15 mm around the room and every fixed point (15 mm for rooms longer or wider than 8 m)

Order extra	7–10 % on top of the room size (cuts and boards you choose not to use)
Underfloor heating	Yes, for most engineered floors: floor surface no hotter than 27 °C (see our ***Underfloor Heating guide***)
Furniture back	Floating: straight away · glued: after the adhesive's cure time (usually 24–48 hours)

Before you start

- **Check your delivery.** Open a few packs and look at the boards in good daylight. Wood is natural, so colour and knots vary from board to board; that is part of its character. If a board has a fault, set it aside and tell us before you fit it. **Once a board is fitted, it is treated as accepted.**
- **Mix your packs.** Work from 3–4 packs at once so the colours and grain spread evenly across the room.
- **Keep a record.** Write down your moisture readings, room temperature and humidity, with the date. Keep them with your receipt: they are needed for any warranty claim.
- **Is the room ready?** Windows and doors fitted, plastering, screeding and painting finished and dry. The wood floor should be one of the last jobs.
- **Get a professional** for glue-down or nail-down fitting, for a new screed, for damp problems, or if you are unsure at any point. A wood floor often costs more to fit than to buy, so it pays to get the start right.

Tools and materials

Tools: tape measure, pencil, set square, 2 m straight edge, expansion spacers (10 mm), tapping block, pull bar, rubber mallet, fine-tooth hand saw or jigsaw, multi-tool or undercut saw (for door frames), drill, moisture meter, knee pads, dust mask, safety glasses, vacuum cleaner.

Materials: the flooring (plus 7–10 %), the right underlay (floating), damp-proof membrane over concrete if the underlay does not include one, aluminium or underlay tape, levelling compound if needed, and finishing trims: skirting or scotia, threshold strips, radiator pipe covers. For glue-down: the adhesive and primer named in your leaflet and the right notched trowel.

Room conditions and acclimatisation

Wood takes up and gives off moisture from the air, swelling slightly when the air is damp and shrinking when it is dry. Letting it settle to the room first means the boards fit together evenly and stay that way.

1. Make sure the room is at **normal living conditions: 18–24 °C and 45–60 % humidity**. Run the heating for a few days beforehand, especially in winter or in a new build.

2. Lay the **unopened packs flat** in the room where they will be fitted (not in a garage, conservatory or damp hallway), away from radiators and direct sun.

3. Leave them for **at least 48 hours**. Open the packs only when you are ready to fit.

4. If you have underfloor heating, follow the start-up steps in our Underfloor Heating guide first.

Check and prepare the subfloor

The subfloor must be **dry, flat, firm and clean**. Most fitting problems start here.

Dry

- **Concrete and sand-cement screed:** a new screed takes about 1 day per mm to dry for the first 40 mm, and 2 days per mm after that (a 75 mm screed: roughly 3–4 months), and longer in cold, damp weather. Always test: no more than **75 % RH** with a hygrometer (or **2 %** with a carbide test).

- **Anhydrite (gypsum) screed:** no more than **0.5 %** (0.3 % with underfloor heating), tested after the surface skin (laitance) has been sanded off.

- **Wooden subfloors** (floorboards, plywood, chipboard): no more than **12 %**, measured with a wood moisture meter in several places, especially near outside walls and pipes.

- Over concrete or screed, **always lay a damp-proof membrane** (at least 0.2 mm polythene, joints overlapped 200–300 mm and taped, turned up the walls behind the skirting) unless your underlay has one built in.

- A membrane protects against normal leftover moisture. It **does not fix a wet floor**: if the readings are too high, wait, or ask a professional about a liquid damp-proof membrane.

Flat

- Lay a 2 m straight edge across the floor in different directions. Any dip or hump of **more than 2 mm** must be put right: fill dips with a levelling compound, plane or sand high spots. Never level with extra foam or soft underlay.

Firm and clean

- Concrete must not be crumbly or cracked. Screw down loose or squeaky floorboards. Old floorboards should be flat; if not, cover them with plywood.
- Lift old carpet, underlay, vinyl and gripper rods. Click floors can go over sound, flat tiles.
- Vacuum thoroughly: one grain of grit under a board can make it creak.

Underlay (floating floors)

A floating floor needs an underlay: it evens out tiny bumps, reduces noise and stops boards rubbing on the subfloor.

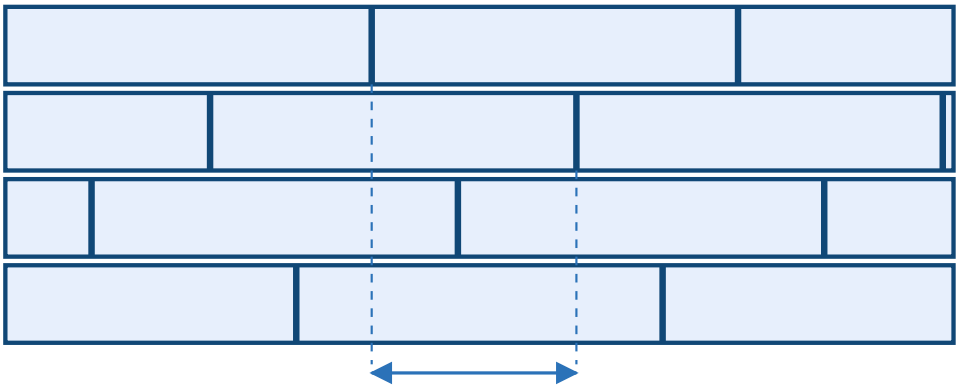
- **Over concrete or screed:** an underlay with a built-in damp-proof membrane, or a separate membrane plus underlay.
- **Over wooden subfloors:** a standard foam or fibre underlay. Makers differ on whether a membrane is needed here, so use one only if your leaflet asks for it.
- **Over underfloor heating:** a thin underlay made for heating (low thermal resistance), as your heating supplier advises.
- Use a firm underlay (typically 2–3 mm, high density). Thick, soft underlay lets click joints flex and break.
- Lay underlay strips edge to edge (not overlapping) and tape the joins.

See our ***Underlay Guide*** for help choosing.

Plan the layout

- **Direction:** boards usually look best running towards the main window (the length of the boards following the light) or along the longest wall. In narrow hallways, run them along the length.
- **Balance the room:** measure the room's width and divide by the board width. If the last row would be narrower than about 50 mm, cut the first row narrower so the first and last rows are similar.

- **Stagger the end joints:** keep end joints in neighbouring rows **at least 400 mm apart**, and never start a row with a piece shorter than about 500 mm. Avoid a regular “staircase” pattern.
- **Door frames:** undercut the door frames and architraves so the boards slide underneath. This looks far neater than cutting around them.
- **Large rooms and doorways:** a floating floor needs a break (expansion profile) in doorways between rooms and in rooms longer or wider than about 8 m, unless your leaflet says otherwise.

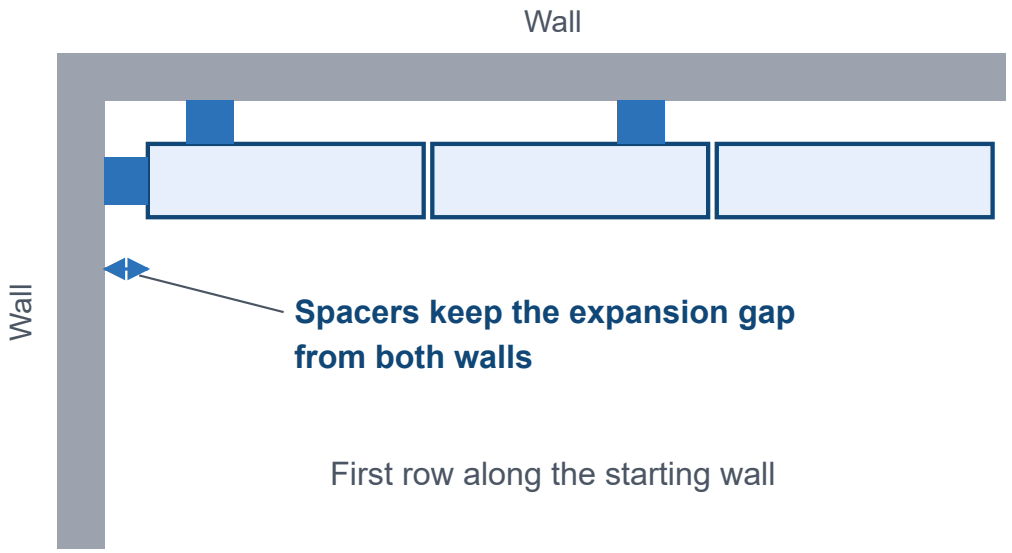


Keep end joints well apart in neighbouring rows
(no regular "staircase" pattern)

Stagger the end joints so they are well apart in neighbouring rows.

Fitting a floating click floor, step by step

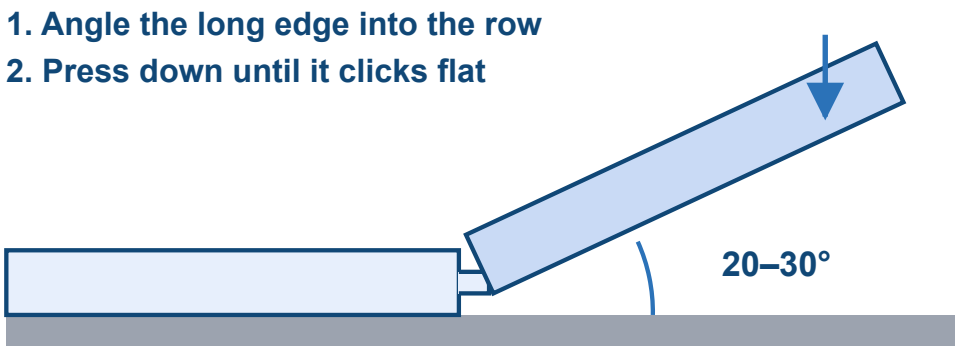
1. **Lay the underlay** (and membrane), taping the joins.
2. **First board:** place it in the corner, tongue side facing the wall, with **10 mm spacers** against both walls.



First row: spacers keep the expansion gap from both walls.

1. **First row:** join the next board end to end. Angle it, lower it so the ends lock, and tap the end gently with the tapping block if your system needs it. Measure and cut the last board of the row, keeping the 10 mm gap.

2. **Second row:** start with the offcut from the first row if it is at least 500 mm long. Angle the long side into the first row at about 20–30° and press it down. Depending on the click system, either lock each board as you go, or join the whole row end to end first and then lift and click the full row in.



Angle the long edge into the row at 20–30°, then press it down.

1. **Check it is straight** after 2–3 rows, and push the floor against the spacers on the front wall.

2. **Carry on row by row**, keeping the end joints at least 400 mm apart. Use the tapping block to close small gaps; **never hit the board edge or the joint directly**, it will damage the click profile.

3. **Pipes:** drill a hole 20 mm wider than the pipe, cut the board through the hole, fit it and glue the small piece back behind the pipe. Cover with a pipe collar.

4. **Last row:** measure the gap to the wall at several points, take off 10 mm, cut the boards to width, and draw them in with the pull bar.

5. **Remove the spacers** and fit the trims (see Finishing, below).

Cutting: with a hand saw, cut with the wood face up; with a jigsaw or circular saw, cut with the face down. This keeps splinters on the underside.

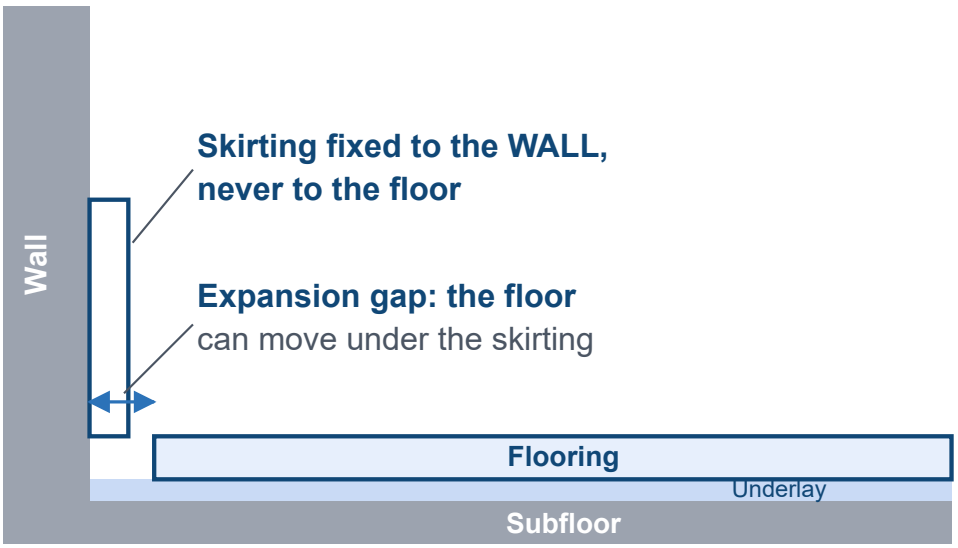
Glued and nailed floors (usually a professional's job)

Fully bonded (glued): the boards are stuck to the subfloor with a flexible wood-floor adhesive (usually an MS polymer). This feels the most solid underfoot and is the best choice for wide boards, large areas and many underfloor heating systems.

- Prime the screed as the adhesive maker says; a damp-proof primer can be used where readings are a little high.
- Spread the adhesive over the whole area under each board with the notched trowel named on the adhesive (often 3 mm on wood, 5 mm on screed). Never use dabs or lines of glue.
- Keep adhesive off the face of the boards; wipe it off at once with the cleaner the maker recommends.
- Keep the same 10–15 mm perimeter gap. Keep heavy furniture off until the adhesive has cured.

Secret nailed: boards with a tongue and groove are nailed at an angle through the tongue into joists or a plywood subfloor (not chipboard), with a flooring nailer, about every 200–300 mm.

Finishing



The skirting, fixed to the wall, covers the expansion gap; the floor can still move.

- Cover the expansion gap with **skirting** (best: take the old skirting off and refit it after) or **scotia** beading. **Fix trims to the wall, never to the floor**, so the floor can move. Do not fill the gap with silicone or filler.
- Fit **threshold strips** in doorways and where the floor meets another floor. Again, fix them so the floor can still move.
- Fit **radiator pipe covers** around pipes.

See our ***Flooring Accessories Guide*** for which trim to use where.

After fitting

- **Floating floors** can be walked on straight away. **Glued floors:** wait for the adhesive's cure time, usually 24 hours before light walking and 48 hours before furniture.
- Put **felt pads** under furniture legs and a **mat** under office chairs. Lift furniture, don't drag it.
- Use **doormats** inside and outside every entrance: grit is the main cause of scratches.
- Keep the room at **18–24 °C and 45–60 % humidity**. In very dry winter weather, small gaps between boards are normal and close again in spring; a humidifier helps.

- **Underfloor heating:** bring the temperature up slowly after fitting, as our Underfloor Heating guide explains.
- **First clean:** vacuum (hard-floor head) or sweep, then a well-wrung damp mop with a wood-floor cleaner. Never use a steam mop or a wet mop.
- If the floor is fitted before other work is finished, cover it with breathable protection board (not plastic sheet) and tape only to the skirting.

Common problems and how to avoid them

PROBLEM	USUAL CAUSE	HOW TO AVOID IT
Boards lifting or “peaking”	No expansion gap, or trims/skirting fixed through the floor	Keep 10–15 mm all round; fix trims to the wall
Gaps opening between boards	Very dry air, heating too high, boards not acclimatised	Acclimatise; keep 45–60 % humidity; raise underfloor heating slowly
Cupping (edges higher than the middle)	Moisture from below	Test the subfloor; use a damp-proof membrane over concrete
Creaking or bouncing	Uneven subfloor, grit, too-soft underlay	Level to 2 mm in 2 m; vacuum; use a firm underlay
Broken click joints	Hitting the joint, soft underlay, bumps	Use a tapping block; firm underlay; flat subfloor

Need help?

Our team is happy to talk you through your room before you start. Call ***020 3287 6206***, ***request a callback***, or order free samples to see the floor in your own light first.

This guide gives general advice for fitting engineered wood flooring in UK homes. The manufacturer's instructions in your pack take priority, and some floors have their own requirements. If in doubt, ask us or use a professional fitter. Version 1, October 2026.

Frequently asked questions

Can I fit engineered wood over underfloor heating?

Yes, most engineered floors are suitable. Keep the floor surface at 27 °C or below and start the heating slowly. Our Underfloor Heating guide explains each step.

Can I fit engineered wood in a kitchen or bathroom?

Kitchens, yes, with care: wipe up spills quickly. Bathrooms are not usually recommended for wood, because of standing water and steam. A waterproof SPC or LVT floor is a better choice there.

Do I need to remove my skirting boards?

It gives the neatest finish, but you can leave them and cover the gap with scotia beading instead.

Can I fit it over floorboards?

Yes, if they are firm, flat and dry. Fit the new boards at right angles to the old ones, or cover the old boards with plywood first.

How much extra flooring should I order?

Add 7–10 % to the room size for cuts and for boards you prefer not to use. For awkward rooms, add a little more. Keep a pack of spares for future repairs.

Why does my floor need an expansion gap?

Wood grows and shrinks slightly with the seasons. Without a gap, it has nowhere to go and can lift or buckle.