

What to Expect From a Professional Luxury Vinyl Plank Installation

Why Homeowners Are Choosing LVT for Remodels

Over the past few years, luxury vinyl plank has become one of the most popular flooring choices for homeowners who want the look of hardwood without the maintenance headaches. I have worked on dozens of kitchen and bathroom remodels where clients originally wanted tile or solid wood, but after we talked through the realities of moisture, daily wear, and HOA restrictions, they settled on LVT. It is not a compromise. In many ways, it is a smarter option for high-traffic spaces.

The key to getting the most out of this material is a proper luxury vinyl plank installation. I have seen beautiful planks ruined by poor subfloor preparation, and I have seen mid-range products perform like premium ones because the installer knew what they were doing. If you are planning a remodel, understanding the process helps you ask the right questions and avoid costly mistakes.

Understanding the Core Materials

Not all luxury vinyl planks are built the same. The two main construction types you will encounter are WPC core and SPC core. WPC, or wood plastic composite, has a foamed core that feels softer underfoot and does a good job of masking minor subfloor imperfections. SPC, or stone plastic composite, is denser and more rigid. I tend to recommend SPC for rooms with direct sunlight because it resists thermal expansion better.

Major manufacturers each have their own take on these cores. Shaw Floors produces a wide range of WPC and SPC options under its Floorte line. Mohawk Industries offers SolidTech, which uses a rigid SPC core. COREtec is one of the most recognized brands in the waterproof category, and their planks use a proprietary WPC core with a cork underlayment layer attached. Mannington Mills has Adura Max, which is a rigid LVT with a click-lock system. LifeProof, sold at home improvement stores, is a solid budget-friendly SPC choice. Armstrong Flooring, TrafficMaster, Pergo, and Tarkett also have strong offerings. The brand you choose matters less than matching the core type to your specific conditions.



Subfloor Preparation Is Half the Job

I cannot stress this enough: subfloor preparation determines how your floor will look and perform five years down the road. Even the best LVT will telegraph every bump, dip, or debris particle left underneath. For a floating floor installation, the subfloor needs to be clean, dry, and flat within manufacturer tolerances. Most specs call for no more than 3/16-inch variation over ten feet. That is not much. I always run a long straightedge across the floor and mark high spots for grinding and low spots for patching.

Concrete subfloors in Houston homes often have moisture issues. A moisture barrier is required in many cases, especially for ground-level slabs. Some LVT products have an attached underlayment, but that does not replace the need for a vapor retarder when the slab is damp. For wood subfloors, you need to check for rot, level the plywood, and ensure there is no squeaking. The extra day spent on prep saves weeks of frustration later.

Floating Floor vs. Glue-Down Method

There are two primary installation methods for [luxury vinyl plank installation](#): floating and glue-down. Each has its place, and choosing between them depends on the room, the subfloor, and the product.

A floating floor uses a click-lock system where the planks snap together without adhesive. This is the most common approach for DIYers and many professional jobs. It is fast, clean, and allows the floor to expand and contract with temperature changes. Most rigid core products, like SPC and WPC, are designed for floating installation. The downside is that the floor can feel slightly hollow underfoot, and you need to leave an expansion gap around the perimeter, which gets covered by baseboards or transition strips.

The glue-down method involves applying adhesive to the subfloor and pressing each plank into place. This method is more labor-intensive but gives a solid feel and works well with thinner LVT products. It is also the preferred method for commercial applications and for rooms with heavy rolling loads, like kitchens with heavy appliances. Glue-down requires a perfectly smooth subfloor and a longer cure time before the floor can be walked on. I usually reserve glue-down for bathrooms where the extra waterproofing seal is worth the effort.

Moisture and Underlayment Considerations

Moisture is the enemy of any floor, and LVT is not completely immune despite being marketed as waterproof. Water can seep through the seams if the installation is not tight, and it can get trapped under the planks if the subfloor is damp. In a bathroom remodel, I always recommend a full moisture barrier over the subfloor before laying any LVT. Some products come with a pre-attached underlayment, but I still add a separate vapor barrier on concrete slabs.



For floating installations, you may need an additional underlayment to improve sound absorption and comfort. Many SPC and WPC cores have an attached pad, but if you are using a product without one, a separate foam underlayment is necessary. Be careful not to use an underlayment that is too thick, as it can cause the click-lock system to separate over time. Follow the manufacturer's guidelines exactly.

Trim and Transitions

One detail that separates a professional finish from an amateur one is how the floor meets walls, doorways, and other flooring types. Baseboards should be removed before installation and reinstalled afterward so the planks slide underneath. This hides the expansion gap and gives a clean look. If you leave the baseboards in place and use quarter round, it can look bulky and dated.

Transition strips are necessary wherever LVT meets a different floor height or material. A T-molding works between two floors of similar height. A reducer strip handles the step-down to a lower surface like carpet or tile. For doorways, you can either cut the planks to fit under the door casing or use a threshold strip. I always keep a few extra transition strips on hand because you never know when a doorway will be slightly out of square.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Over the years, I have seen the same mistakes come up again and again. Here are the most important ones to watch for:

- Skipping the acclimation period. LVT needs to sit in the room for at least 48 hours before installation to adjust to temperature and humidity. Ignoring this can lead to gapping or buckling.
- Not leaving an expansion gap. Even rigid planks expand and contract. A gap of at least 1/4 inch around the perimeter is standard.
- Using the wrong underlayment. Too thick or too soft an underlayment can break the click-lock joints.
- Rushing subfloor prep. A bump you ignore will show through the plank forever.
- Mixing lots from different production runs. Planks can vary slightly in color or thickness between batches. Always buy enough for the whole job at once.

Working With HOA Regulations

If you live in a community with a homeowners association, you might have additional rules about flooring. Some HOAs restrict the types of flooring allowed in upstairs units due to noise

concerns. Others require proof that the installation meets certain fire or sound ratings. I have had clients who chose LVT specifically because it satisfied HOA requirements while still looking high-end. A proper luxury vinyl plank installation with the right underlayment can meet those sound-transmission standards without sacrificing aesthetics. Always check your HOA guidelines before ordering materials, and keep the product data sheets handy for approval.



Final Thoughts on Hiring a Pro vs. DIY

LVT is one of the more forgiving flooring materials for a confident DIYer, especially if you choose a floating floor with a click-lock system. But there is a difference between a floor that looks okay and one that looks like it was installed by someone who does this every day. Professional installers bring experience with subfloor preparation, tricky cuts around cabinets and door frames, and the patience to get transitions perfect. If your remodel involves multiple rooms, complex layouts, or HOA inspections, hiring a pro is money well spent.

At the end of the day, the material is only as good as the installation. Take the time to choose the right core type, prepare the subfloor properly, and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Your floor will thank you for years to come.