



# CORK IMPORTS

A U S T R A L I A

**New Generation Cork Tiles  
Installation & Maintenance Guide**



## **Variations in Cork**

Like Timber, Cork is a natural material and is subject to variations such as colour, texture and natural occurring features within the cork between different batches. It is these naturally occurring variations that are celebrated in the end product, giving your floor a natural and less sterile look.

We recommend you take care when making a selection based on a single sample. While our samples are a close representation, they are not clones and the cork flooring supplied will contain variations from batch to batch.

The New Generation coloured cork tiles will also have a slight colour variation from tile to tile and in particular, the edges of the tiles are usually slightly lighter than the middle. This variation is due to a number of factors which are outside the control of Cork Imports Australia, but we do endeavour to achieve a unified overall look and feel in our products.

## **Cork Floor Tiles Laying Guidelines**

*\*Please note the below are strictly guidelines and are not to be interpreted as a step by step instruction manual. Consult an experienced installer if necessary.*

### **Important Issues to Avoid**

The most common problems and source of dissatisfaction are not caused by the product itself but by inappropriate installation procedures (deficient sub-floor preparation, use of wrong adhesives or finishes etc).

Installing cork floors in areas with excessive sub-floor moisture should be avoided.

When using levelling compounds, it is essential that the compound is completely dry and cured prior to installation of the tiles. If the compounds are not dry then you will have adhesion issues. As such, it is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions. Only recommended adhesives and finishes should be used.

Please note that New Generation Cork Tiles are only warranted using the Cork Imports Australia supplied primer and glue which has been designed specifically for the tiles supplied.

### **Subfloor / Floor Preparation**

Preparation of the sub-floor is essential for a successful installation.

Concrete floors must be smooth, levelled, permanently dry and free of dust and grease. On non-floating sub-floors and on sub-floors that are not sufficiently ventilated, adequate moisture insulation should first be applied. The percentage of moisture of the sub-floor must not exceed 5.5%. Irregularities in the sub-floor must not be filled with glue but should be smoothed with adequate filler.

Wooden floors must be made smooth (it may be necessary to machine sand the floor).

Linoleum or vinyl must be removed or, if not possible, must be made very rough to ensure adhesive bond.

#### **Concrete Floors**

Sand and clean concrete, fill all holes and cracks, remove any silicone and wash with solvent, remove all paint, grease, dust etc

#### **Timber Floors**

Inspect floor for suitability of hardboard underlay. If not suitable, the floor will need to be rough sanded.

Any loose boards should be nailed down.

#### **Chipboard or Plywood Floors**

Sand any joins level and fill all nail or screw holes.

Ply floors can delaminate, and chipboard can swell with moisture. Check for any of these signs and rectify before progressing.

## **Control**

Before installation, please control the tiles. If you come across a defect in production please register the complaint at your supplier immediately and do not install!

When checking the cork tiles, keep in mind that you are dealing with a natural material. The tiles may have slight variations in colour or structure. They contribute to the charm and originality of a cork covering. To achieve the most pleasing blend of shades, shuffle different packs before laying.

## **Planning the Layout**

First, determine how you will install the tiles.

Tiles should be installed staggered (or "half-brick"). The layout of the installation is to be determined by the installer (who may consult the end-user if appropriate).

Principles, which should normally be followed, are:

- Minimise the number of joints necessary;
- Lay strips along passages, in the direction of traffic, along the length of a room, or towards the wall containing the main window;
- Avoid the use of sensitive patterns where there is a risk of fading from high temperatures or intense sunlight;
- Ensure that, as far as possible, material from the same batch is used in the same area;
- Ensure you sort or mix the tiles from carton to carton to allow a pleasing variation on the floor.

Once you have selected the layout, you must determine the starting point. Generally, installation starts in the middle of the room and progresses towards the sides. Stretch a so-called adjusting string from the middle of the opposite walls. Start along the string and determine the way and the pattern by laying some loose tiles.

## **Gluing / Priming**

The Recommended adhesive and primer for installing New Generation Cork Tiles is Tradies Own Contact Adhesive & Primer.

### **Primer**

- Clean sub floor ensuring floor is free from grease, oil and debris
- Mark out and set down chalk lines
- Apply a liberal coating of primer to subfloor using a roller-brush or flat trowel (circa 8-10m/L)
- Allow primer to dry before applying contact adhesive ensuring adequate ventilation
- If using a flat trowel, clean thoroughly as this can be used for applying the adhesive

### **Adhesive**

- Cork Contact adhesive is pressure sensitive
- Ensure sub floor is clean and apply a liberal coating of cork contact adhesive to sub floor using a roller-brush or trowel (circa 8-10m/L)
- Allow adhesive to go clear before starting installation
- Ensure adequate ventilation
- Place pre-glued cork tiles along chalk line and ensure they are placed correctly
- When tile lines are acceptable apply a downward pressure to complete adhesion
- If adhesive ends up on coloured tiles, wipe off when wet or peel off when dry
- If adhesive ends up on natural cork, allow to dry then sand off with normal sanding
- Clean trowel with water and allow to dry and peel off

### **Finishing**

Your New Generation pre-finished cork tiles do not require further varnishing. The latest in Wearplus technology features a hot melt coating and 3 additional factory coats.

### **Traditional Cork Tiles**

If you have purchased traditional cork tiles you will need to sand and polish.

There are two types of polyurethane we supply:

#### **Solvent Based:**

- Most common polyurethane used.
- Available in Matt, Satin, Semi-gloss and gloss finishes
- The higher the shine the longer the last

#### **Water Based:**

- Environmentally friendly and faster drying times
- Available in Satin and Gloss finish
- Used on colour cork and traditional cork
- The surface finish will be less glossy compared to solvent based polyurethane.
- Less odour compared to solvent based polyurethane

## **Maintenance & Preventative Care Tips**

The following hints will help you avoid problems before they become one.

### **What to do:**

- Stop the dirt before it reaches the floor by placing interior and exterior doormats at all entrances. They should be designed to allow grit/dirt and moisture to be removed.
- Place rugs at areas where the wear is greater, e.g. in front of kitchen sinks, at the end of steps and within high traffic pathways. The rugs must be of breathable material to prevent moisture entrapment. Avoid rugs with solid rubber or vinyl backings.
- Remove spills promptly.
- Use protective pads or caps under furniture.
- Keep animal claws trimmed to minimize scratches.
- Avoid prolonged exposure to direct sunlight through the use of blinds or curtains.

### **What not to do:**

- Don't let sand, dirt or grit build up. They can act like sandpaper, abrading or dulling your floor finish.
- Don't wet mop your floors. Too much water can cause the floor to swell or warp.
- Do not use heat or steam mops.
- Don't slide heavy objects on the floor. If the object can't be lifted, try placing a blanket and a solid panel underneath it, then gently lift/pull it across the surface. Do not use cardboard for this purpose. Ensure that the surface is free from grit.
- Never use any of the following products (or similar) on your finished floor:
  - ammonia-based cleaners
  - acrylic finishes
  - wax-based products
  - bleach
  - oil soap
  - abrasive cleaning soaps
  - acidic materials such as vinegar

Many of these products can dull or etch the finish.

## **Cleaning**

Day to day sweeping (using an anti-static mop) or vacuuming (ensure bristles on vacuum head are down) is all that is needed.

Most scuff marks will come off by wiping with a damp cloth.

A chemically neutral product from a commercial cleaning supplier that will not have a detrimental effect on the floor finish can be applied. Follow manufactures instructions on the bottle. Apply product using a microfibre mop.

Much like a timber floor, do not use excessive water on your cork floor.

**IMPORTANT**—we do not recommend using a scrubbing machine to apply products or the use of steam mops.

## Re-Surfacing Cork Tiles

Our *New Generation* Cork tiles come with a 15 year residential wear warranty.

It is recommended traditional cork floor tiles be re-surfaced approximately every 4-6 years to keep the shine as required by client.

### When to re-surface:

Should your floor start to appear dull and hard to keep clean it may need a new surface. Please consult your local installer.

#### ***The Procedure:***

Clean floor with an approved cleaning solvent

Sand lightly to ensure new polyurethane adheres

**Note\*** Some polyurethanes are not compatible with each other. A single pack, moisture cured polyurethane must be used.

**Note\*** IF a floor is flaking or peeling expert advice should be sought before progressing.

## Re-Sanding Cork Tiles

Re-sanding traditional cork tiles should only happen as the last resort.

### When to Re-sand:

- When floor has not been maintained appropriately
- Fire or flood damage
- Individual tiles removed or replaced
- Floor is peeling or flaking

#### ***The Procedure:***

- Cork has to be rough sanded to remove existing polyurethane
- Buff the cork to ensure a smooth finish
- Follow with a hi-speed buff
- Apply 3 heavy coats of polyurethane