

You must read and understand these instructions completely before installing Aronson's Cork Tile Flooring. If these instructions leave you with unanswered questions or if you need additional information, please contact Aronson's Floor Covering at (212) 243 4993 before starting installation.

It is the responsibility of the installer to determine suitability of Aronson's Cork Tile Flooring for each application. Prior to installation, installer should inspect all material. Any defect must be reported directly to Aronson's. Should an individual tile be doubtful in appearance or dimension, the installer should not use the tile. Aronson's will send a replacement in a timely manner.

Aronson's guarantees the quality of our cork tile flooring. Our warranty does not extend to the quality of work performed by a selected installer. Aronson's disclaims all liability for faulty installation of its product. This warranty does not cover material with visible defects once they are installed. Aronson's declines responsibility for failure resulting from or connected with subfloor or job-site damage or deficiencies.

### Color Variation:

Cork is a natural wood product; variations in color, therefore, occur naturally. Mix tiles from different boxes to maintain natural color and pattern variation and achieve an optimal visual blend.

### Acclimation:

Cork Tile flooring must be allowed to acclimate on-site for **a minimum of 48 hours** in advance of installation. Stack boxes of tiles no more than 3 high on their edges. The adhesive supplied by Aronson's should be stored at room temperature and not allowed to freeze. During storage and installation, maintain temperature and relative humidity to levels consistent with the conditions that will prevail when the building is occupied. Optimum conditions are 70°F (21°C) at 30-50% relative humidity.

### Substrate Preparation:

Cork Tiles may be installed directly over concrete or wood subfloors. In both cases the substrate must be sound, clean, free of contamination, dry, smooth, level and flat with a maximum variation of 1/8" across 10'. Any surface imperfections in the subfloor can telescope through the cork tile and be visible on the finished surface.

### Underlayment-grade Plywood and Man-made Board Substrates:

We recommend using an underlayment- grade plywood or board that is guaranteed smooth and free of voids (follow manufacturer's installation instructions). Fill and smooth all joints, cracks and imperfections with a Portland cement-based underlayment patching product such as Ardex Feather Finish, Henry 549 Feather-Finish, or Mapei PlaniPatch.

Subfloor must not exceed 14% moisture content (as measured by electrical resistance testing). Check basements and crawl spaces to ensure that they are dry and well-ventilated. Aronson's recommends placing 6 mil polyethylene sheeting as a vapour barrier in crawl spaces.

### Concrete Substrate:

Fill any low spots with appropriate filler (as above) and scrape or grind any high spots. Slab must be cured a minimum of 28 days. Flooring must not be installed if vapor pressure exceeds 3 lbs. per 1000 square feet in 24 hours as tested according to ASTM F 1869 (calcium chloride test method). Preferably, the slab should be tested according to ASTM F 2170 (Standard Test Method for Determining Relative Humidity in Concrete Floor Slabs Using In-Situ Probes). Flooring must not be installed if the relative humidity inside of the concrete slab exceeds 75%.

**Required tools:**

- Vacuum cleaner and broom
- Tape measure
- Chalk-line
- Short nap (3/8") roller and frame for applying contact adhesive to floor
- Painter's extension pole for glue roller
- Clean paint tray
- Sharp utility knife
- Straight-edge or carpenter's square
- Small hand j-roller
- 75 or 100 lbs roller (available as a tool rental)
- Water-based low VOC contact adhesive (supplied by Aronson's)
- MP765 water-based low-VOC polyurethane & catalyst (supplied by Aronson's)
- Synthetic pad wall applicator for varnish (supplied by Aronson's)

**Layout:**

Decide in which direction you will lay the tile in the space (i.e., running ↔ or ↕). Establish a straight line parallel to the longest "reference" surface (a wall, ceiling, or floor - depending on your application) that runs in the same direction as you want the tiles with the aid of a chalk-line.

Using a tape measure or ruler, measure the width of one cork tile away from that wall and mark the floor at both ends of the wall. Snap a chalk line between these two points. Verify at several points that the distance between the line and the wall never exceeds the width of one tile. If the space is bigger than the width of one tile at any point along the wall (because of irregularities or imperfections in the wall), snap a new chalk line that is a bit closer to the wall. This chalk line will serve as your guide to keep your first row straight and parallel to the wall.

**Spreading the adhesive:**

Sweep and thoroughly vacuum the floor to remove all debris and dust leftover from subfloor preparation. Pour the adhesive into a paint tray and apply with a new short nap roller attached to a painter's extension pole. Take care to gently seal your chalk-line with the adhesive.

You may coat the entire area or as much square footage as you feel you can install in one day.

Wait at least **60 minutes** for the contact adhesive to dry. The glue will become translucent (more transparent, less opaque) when dry. A slight gloss on the surface of the dried glue indicates that there is enough glue on the floor. If the substrate was too porous (absorbing the glue) and the dried glue looks dull (matte, no gloss), roll on another thin coat of adhesive and wait 60 minutes for it to dry. Avoid walking on the glued floor.

**Never install tiles onto wet adhesive.** The supplied adhesive is water-based for easy clean up with water when still wet. Dried adhesive must be mechanically removed.

**Installing the pre-glued tiles:**

Make sure that you brush or dust off the back of the tiles before installing them. Any debris left on the back of a tile will telescope through the cork and be visible on the face of tile.

You will start your first row of tiles along your chalk line, leaving the space between the line and the wall to be filled later. Continue to work away from the reference line, laying parallel rows. When using a 12" x 24" format tile, subsequent rows should be offset to stagger the joints. As in brickwork, start a new row by laying a tile at the mid-point of a tile from the previous row to offset the joints.

Line up the edge of your tile with your chalk guideline and set the tile down lightly. Only apply pressure when the cork is perfectly aligned. Pressure will cause cork to stick firmly and further adjustment will not be possible. When laying subsequent tiles, play around with the flexibility of the cork to make the joints between the tiles as tight as possible and avoid gaps.

Use a small hand J-roller to press down all the edges and joints between tiles as you go. Once all the tiles have been laid in the space, roll down all of the joints again with a 100 lbs. roller to make sure that all the tiles are firmly adhered.

Fill visible gaps between tiles with a color-matched latex caulking (available at special wood flooring stores) or wood filler putty tinted with touch-up stain supplied by Aronson's. Wipe away excess with a damp rag.

#### **Applying the urethane finish:**

Thoroughly sweep and then vacuum the unvarnished cork floor to remove any cork crumbs and work-site dust. Keeping the floor as clean as possible throughout the varnishing process ensures a clear, high quality finish.

First, you must **catalyze** the MP765 urethane varnish. (Never use varnish uncatalyzed). Stir the varnish well to mix any solids that may have settled during shipping back into the liquid. Stir gently while gradually pouring the entire bottle of pre-measured catalyst into the MP765 varnish. Do not dump the catalyst in without stirring, as it may harden prematurely at the bottom of the can. Continue stirring for 3 minutes to ensure catalyst is mixed in.

The catalyzed varnish is good for four days but we recommend filtering it with the supplied filters if you are varnishing over the course of several days. Filtering the varnish when pouring into your applicator tray is also recommended.

- Pour the catalyzed varnish into a clean paint tray and soak the supplied applicator with varnish.
- Never use a roller to apply urethane as bubbles will result.
- Each coat should be applied thinly. Too thick of an application can result in runs and drips in the finish.
- Allow a minimum of **2 to 3 hours** drying between coats. Drying times will vary with ambient temperature and humidity.
- **Four coats** of varnish are required. Ideally, the first two coats of varnish are applied in one day, and the last two coats the following day.
- Fans may be used to accelerate drying time between coats, but be careful not to blow dust or debris into the wet varnish.
- Apply the first coat of varnish across the long dimension of the tiles, in a smooth, gentle motion (similar to cleaning).
- Apply the second coat perpendicular to the first coat, along the long dimension of the tiles.
- After the second coat is completely dry, fill any visible gaps between tiles with color-matched latex caulking or wood putty the colour of the raw (unvarnished) cork. We recommend a light brown shade like Lepage's light oak. Once the putty is dry, tint the putty using the supplied touch up stain. After the last 2 coats of urethane are applied, these patches blend in with the rest of the floor.
- Between the second and third coats only, we recommend a light manual (never machine) sanding using a 220-grit sanding paper followed by a vacuuming.
- After the fourth coat of varnish, allow **overnight drying** before walking on the cork floor with shoes.
- To avoid streaks, the final coat should be allowed to dry slowly and without artificial ventilation (fans).
- Wait **48 hours** before placing cabinets, furniture, or appliances on the varnished floor.

**Maintenance:**

Your cork floor is well protected by our urethane finish. To keep your cork flooring looking beautiful over a long lifetime, the secret is to keep it clean by regular sweeping and vacuuming.

- Prevent grit, sand, salt and dirt from being ground into the floor as this will dull or scratch the finish.
- When occasionally damp-mopping the floor, use a **hardwood floor cleaner** (e.g., Bona, Finitec, Basic Coatings) at a 1:10 dilution. Use a well wrung mop.
- **Do not clean with oil soap or apply wax as this will damage the urethane finish.**
- Never use a buffing machine to maintain the floor as it will damage the floor.
- Spills should be wiped up immediately.
- For cleaning small spots, like scuff marks from shoes, apply a hardwood floor cleaner with a spray bottle.
- Walk-off mats at entrance doors and in front of kitchen sinks are encouraged.
- Protect your floor from everyday use by installing felt or plastic protectors under “feet” of furniture.
- Caster-wheeled chairs should have wide casters, preferably in neoprene.
- Observe re-finishing maintenance schedule (see below) and re-varnish the cork floor when high-traffic areas begin to show signs of wear.

**Warranty**

We offer a 5-year renewable finish warranty for our cork flooring for normal wear and tear if you follow the following re-finishing maintenance schedule.

To ensure the lasting beauty of your cork floor an additional coating of urethane should be applied:

- Once a year for high-traffic commercial;
- Once every 2 to 3 years for low to medium traffic; or,
- Once every 5 to 7 years for residential cork flooring installations.

Re-varnishing is a simple, inexpensive, and fast operation. A light manual scuff sanding of the floor with 220-grit paper is followed by a thorough vacuuming. Apply two coats of our MP765 water-based varnish, allowing 4 hours of drying time between coats. Let the 2nd coat dry overnight and floor is ready for regular traffic.

A well-maintained cork surface will last for decades.

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