Product	
Supplier	Flooring2
Product Type	Laminate Flooring
Number	HZ
Name	Horizon

Laminate Flooring Care and Maintenance Guide

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Important Notice

> **READ BEFORE USE**

This guide provides comprehensive care and maintenance information for laminate flooring. Following these guidelines will help preserve your floor's appearance, extend its lifespan, and maintain warranty coverage. Always refer to your specific product's care instructions, as requirements may vary by manufacturer and product line.

Understanding Laminate Flooring: Laminate is a multi-layer synthetic flooring product. The top layer is a clear wear layer (melamine), followed by a high-resolution image layer (photographic paper), then a core layer (high-density fiberboard/HDF), and a backing layer. Unlike hardwood, laminate cannot be refinished—the image layer is only surface-deep.

Disclaimer: This guide contains general recommendations based on industry best practices. We are not responsible for damage resulting from improper care, use of unapproved products, or failure to follow manufacturer-specific guidelines.

Quick Reference Card

Daily Care

Task	Frequency	Tools/Products
Sweep or dust mop	Daily	Microfiber dust mop, soft broom
Wipe up spills immediately	As needed	Dry or barely damp cloth
Entry mat maintenance	Daily	Shake out mats

Weekly Care

Task	Frequency	Tools/Products
Vacuum (hard-floor setting)	2-3 times weekly	Vacuum with no beater bar
Damp mop (minimal moisture)	Weekly	Slightly damp microfiber mop, approved cleaner
Inspect for damage	Weekly	Visual inspection

Periodic Care

Task	Frequency	Tools/Products
Deep clean	Monthly	Laminate-approved cleaner
Check expansion gaps	Quarterly	Visual inspection
Comprehensive condition check	Annually	Full inspection

Routine Maintenance

Daily Care

Dust Mopping and Sweeping:

Daily dust removal is essential for laminate flooring. Grit, sand, and debris act as abrasives that scratch the wear layer with every step.

Proper Technique:

- Use a microfiber dust mop (traps and holds dust)
- Sweep in overlapping strokes
- Work toward a collection point
- Clean mop heads regularly (wash weekly)
- Can also use soft-bristle broom

Why Daily Sweeping Matters:

- Prevents scratching of wear layer
- Maintains floor's appearance
- Reduces need for wet cleaning
- Protects your flooring investment

Frequency Guidelines by Traffic Level:

Traffic Level	Examples	Recommended Frequency
High Traffic	Entryways, kitchens, hallways	Daily
Medium Traffic	Living rooms, family rooms	Every 2-3 days
Low Traffic	Bedrooms, guest rooms	2-3 times weekly

Weekly Care

Dry-to-Damp Cleaning (Minimal Moisture!):

> **Critical:** Laminate flooring must never be wet mopped. Water is laminate's biggest enemy—it can penetrate seams and cause swelling.

Proper Damp Mopping Technique:

- Sweep or vacuum thoroughly first
- Use a flat mop with microfiber pad
- Spray laminate cleaner onto mop pad (NOT directly on floor)
- Mop in sections, working with plank direction
- The mop should be barely damp—almost dry
- Floor should dry within 1-2 minutes
- If it takes longer to dry, you're using too much moisture

Key Rules:

- Never pour water or cleaner directly on floor
- Never use a soaking wet mop
- Never let water pool or stand—especially at seams
- Dry any wet areas immediately

Vacuuming:

- □ Use hard-floor setting (beater bar/rotating brush OFF)
- □ Or use soft brush attachment
- □ Pay special attention to edges and corners
- □ Clean along seams where debris collects

Recommended Cleaning Solution:

- Laminate-specific floor cleaner (spray type)
- pH-neutral, no-residue formula
- Manufacturer-approved products preferred
- Never use all-purpose household cleaners

Monthly Care

Deep Cleaning (Still Minimal Moisture!):

Even monthly deep cleaning must avoid excess moisture.

Procedure:

- Vacuum or sweep thoroughly
- Use laminate-specific cleaner
- Apply to microfiber mop (not floor)
- Clean in manageable sections
- Work with the plank direction
- Floor should dry within minutes
- Never leave standing moisture

Spill and Stain Management

Immediate Response Protocol

> **Golden Rule:** Address ALL spills immediately. Laminate's HDF core can swell when moisture penetrates seams, causing permanent damage.

Step 1: Wipe Up Immediately

- Use a clean, dry, absorbent cloth
- Blot up all liquid completely
- Work quickly—don't let liquid spread to seams

Step 2: Dry the Area

- Wipe dry with clean cloth
- Ensure no moisture remains at seams
- Use fan to accelerate drying if needed

Step 3: Clean if Needed

- If residue remains, use approved cleaner
- Apply to cloth, not floor
- Wipe clean, then dry immediately

Step 4: Inspect

- Check area after 24 hours
- Watch for any swelling, bubbling, or damage
- Address issues promptly

Common Stain Removal Guide

Stain Type	Treatment Method	Products to Use	Notes
Water spots	Wipe immediately, dry thoroughly	Clean cloth	Prevention is key
Food spills	Wipe up, clean with approved cleaner	Laminate cleaner	Don't let food dry on surface
Grease/Oil	Wipe up, clean carefully	Laminate cleaner, may need multiple passes	Avoid spreading
Coffee/Tea/Wine	Blot immediately, clean	Laminate cleaner	Can stain if left
Pet accidents	Blot immediately, enzyme then cleaner	Enzyme cleaner, then laminate cleaner	Never let sit
Ink	Dab carefully with cleaner	Laminate cleaner, or rubbing alcohol (test)	Don't spread
Nail polish	Use acetone-free remover	Nail polish remover (test first)	Work quickly
Candle wax	Freeze, scrape gently	Ice to harden, plastic scraper	Don't scratch surface
Gum	Freeze, scrape	Ice, plastic scraper	Be careful with wear layer
Heel marks	Rub with soft cloth	Laminate cleaner	Usually come off easily
Scuff marks	Erase gently	Soft cloth, or magic eraser (test)	Don't scrub aggressively
Adhesive	Use appropriate remover	Manufacturer-approved (test first)	Avoid harsh solvents

Stain Removal Best Practices

DO:

- □ Respond to spills immediately (seconds count)
- □ Blot—don't wipe (prevents spreading)
- □ Use laminate-approved products
- □ Test cleaners in hidden area first
- □ Dry area completely after cleaning
- □ Work with the plank direction

DON'T:

- □ Never let liquids sit—even briefly
- □ Never use excessive water or wet mops
- □ Never use abrasive cleaners or pads
- □ Never use vinegar, ammonia, or bleach
- □ Never use polish, wax, or shine products
- □ Never use steam cleaners

Deep Cleaning

DIY Deep Cleaning

Frequency: Monthly for high-traffic areas, quarterly for general areas

Important Understanding:

> "Deep cleaning" for laminate still means minimal moisture. Never wet mop or flood the floor.

Materials Needed:

- □ Microfiber dust mop
- □ Vacuum with hard-floor setting
- □ Laminate-specific floor cleaner (spray)
- □ Microfiber mop pads
- □ Clean, dry cloths

Procedure:

1. **Preparation**
   - Remove furniture and rugs
   - Sweep or vacuum entire floor thoroughly
   - Pre-treat any stubborn spots
2. **Cleaning Process**
   - Spray cleaner onto mop pad (NOT on floor)
   - Clean in sections, working with plank direction
   - Use overlapping strokes
   - Floor should dry within 1-2 minutes
   - If you see moisture sitting, you're using too much
3. **Completion**
   - Floor should be dry almost immediately
   - Buff with dry cloth if any residue
   - Replace furniture using felt pads

Professional Deep Cleaning

When to Call a Professional:

- Heavy buildup from wrong cleaning products
- Stubborn spots not responding to DIY cleaning
- Large commercial spaces
- Pre-sale cleaning and preparation

Important Notes:

- Professionals should use laminate-appropriate methods
- No wet mopping or steam cleaning
- Ensure professional understands laminate limitations

• Laminate cannot be refinished or restored like hardwood

Approved and Prohibited Products

Approved Products

Category	Approved Products	Notes
Daily/Weekly Cleaner	Laminate-specific spray cleaner	pH-neutral, no-residue formula
Deep Cleaner	Manufacturer-approved intensive cleaner	Still use minimally
Spot Cleaner	Laminate-approved spot treatment	For specific stains

Prohibited Products

> **WARNING:** Using prohibited products will damage laminate and void your warranty. Damage is often permanent because laminate cannot be refinished.

Product Type	Why It's Prohibited	Potential Damage
Water/wet mops	Water penetrates seams	Swelling, bubbling, permanent damage
Steam cleaners	Heat and moisture	Warping, delamination, core damage
Vinegar	Acidic—attacks wear layer	Dulling, surface damage
Ammonia	Damages surface	Clouding, wear layer breakdown
Bleach	Harsh chemical	Discoloration, surface damage
Abrasive cleaners	Scratches wear layer	Permanent scratching
Wax or polish	Creates buildup	Slippery, cloudy appearance
Oil-based products	Leaves residue	Sticky residue, attracts dirt
"Mop and shine" products	Buildup, wrong chemistry	Hazy film, sticky surface
All-purpose cleaners	Wrong pH, leave residue	Streaking, residue buildup

Cleaning Equipment Guidelines

Approved Equipment:

- □ Microfiber dust mops
- □ Soft-bristle brooms
- □ Vacuums with hard-floor setting (no beater bar)
- □ Spray mops with microfiber pads
- □ Soft, clean cloths

Prohibited Equipment:

- □ **Steam mops** - Causes swelling, warping, delamination
- □ **Wet mops** - Excess moisture damages core
- □ **String mops** - Hold too much water
- □ **Beater bar vacuums** - Can scratch surface
- □ **Abrasive scrub pads** - Scratches wear layer
- □ **Sponge mops** - Hold too much water

Climate and Environmental Control

Temperature Requirements

Condition	Recommended Range	Acceptable Range	Risk if Exceeded
Room Temperature	60°F - 80°F (15°C - 27°C)	55°F - 85°F (13°C - 29°C)	Expansion, contraction, gapping

Humidity Requirements

Condition	Recommended Range	Acceptable Range	Risk if Exceeded
Relative Humidity	35% - 55% RH	30% - 65% RH	Too low: gapping; Too high: swelling, buckling

Why Humidity Control Matters:

Laminate's HDF core responds to moisture in the air:

- **High humidity (>55%):** Core absorbs moisture, can expand and buckle
- **Low humidity (<35%):** Core dries out, gaps can appear between planks

Humidity Management Tips:

- Use a hygrometer to monitor humidity
- Use dehumidifier in humid seasons or basements
- Use humidifier in dry winter months
- Maintain consistent conditions year-round
- Respond to humidity changes before damage occurs

Seasonal Considerations

Winter:

- Heating systems dry air significantly
- Use humidifier to maintain 35-55% RH
- Minor gapping may be normal—should close when humidity rises
- Keep entry mats clean (salt and snow are damaging)

Summer:

- High humidity can cause swelling
- Use air conditioning and/or dehumidifier
- Watch for any buckling or peaking
- Ensure adequate ventilation

Transition Seasons:

- Gradually adjust climate control
- Monitor for floor movement
- Spring and fall humidity swings need management

Sunlight and UV Protection

- **Use window treatments** - UV exposure can fade laminate
- **Rotate area rugs** - Prevent uneven color change
- **Move furniture periodically** - Avoid tan lines
- **Consider UV-filtering window film** - Reduces fading
- **Expect some fading** - Normal over time with sun exposure

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Preventive Care Strategies

Furniture Protection

Felt Pads - Essential on Every Furniture Piece:

- Use felt pads under ALL furniture legs and bases
- Choose quality, thick felt pads
- Replace pads when worn or compressed
- Clean debris from pads regularly
- Check monthly and replace as needed

Heavy Furniture:

- Use furniture coasters or cups to distribute weight
- Never drag furniture—ALWAYS lift
- Use furniture sliders when moving
- Get help for heavy items
- Check for indentations periodically

Rolling Furniture:

- Chair mats are essential under rolling chairs
- Use hard-surface chair mats rated for hard floors
- Choose soft rubber casters (not hard plastic)
- Check casters regularly for debris
- Keep chair mat clean

Entry Point Protection

Walk-Off Mat Strategy:

- Exterior scraper mat to remove debris
- Interior absorbent mat (6+ feet recommended)
- Use non-rubber-backed mats only
- Clean mats regularly (dirty mats redistribute grit)
- Replace mats when worn

> **IMPORTANT:** Avoid rubber-backed and latex-backed mats. They can trap moisture and potentially discolor the floor.

Entry Protocols:

- Remove shoes when possible (best protection)
- Wipe feet thoroughly when entering
- Keep mats effective and clean

Pet Care

Nail Maintenance:

- Keep pet nails trimmed and smooth
- Use nail grinders for smoothest edges
- Consider nail caps if needed
- Regular trimming prevents scratches

Accident Management:

- Clean up immediately—moisture is critical threat
- Blot thoroughly with dry cloth first
- Clean with enzyme cleaner, then laminate cleaner
- Dry completely—check seams for moisture
- Monitor for any swelling

Food and Water:

- Use waterproof mats under bowls
- Clean up splashes immediately
- Consider raised bowl stands
- Wipe area around bowls daily

Damage Prevention

Protect Against:

- **Grit and sand** - Daily sweeping essential
- **Standing water** - Wipe up immediately
- **Dragging furniture** - Always lift
- **High heels** - Can dent
- **Heavy dropped objects** - Can chip or dent

In Kitchens:

- Clean spills immediately
- Use mats at sink and work areas
- Protect floor during appliance moves
- Monitor for any moisture sources

Room-Specific Guidelines

Kitchens

- Clean all spills immediately (common water exposure)
- Use mats at sink, stove, and dishwasher areas
- Protect floor when moving appliances
- Check under dishwasher for leaks periodically
- Consider waterproof laminate for kitchens

Bathrooms

> **Caution:** Standard laminate is generally not recommended for bathrooms

If installed in bathroom:

- Use waterproof laminate only
- Ensure excellent ventilation
- Wipe up all water immediately after use
- Use bath mats (non-rubber backing)
- Check around fixtures for moisture
- Consider alternative flooring for high-moisture bathrooms

Basements

- Monitor humidity continuously (below 60% RH)
- Use dehumidifier as needed
- Ensure proper installation with moisture barrier
- Watch for any water intrusion
- May require waterproof laminate
- Check perimeter for moisture regularly

High-Traffic Areas

- Sweep or vacuum daily
- Use area rugs (non-rubber backing)
- Rotate rugs to even exposure
- Monitor for wear patterns
- Clean more frequently

Entryways

- Highest risk for tracked-in grit and moisture
- Comprehensive mat system essential
- Clean mats frequently
- Inspect regularly for wear
- Consider heavy-duty commercial mats

Areas with Radiant Heat

- Verify laminate is rated for radiant heat
- Maximum floor surface temperature: 85°F (29°C)
- Gradual temperature changes
- Never exceed temperature limits
- Monitor for any expansion issues

Troubleshooting Common Issues

Gapping Between Planks

Symptoms:

- Visible gaps between planks
- Usually more noticeable in dry seasons

Possible Causes:

- Low humidity
- Normal seasonal movement
- Improper acclimation at installation
- Insufficient expansion gaps at walls

Solutions:

- Check and maintain humidity (35-55% RH)
- Small gaps may close when humidity rises
- Large gaps may require professional assessment

Prevention:

- Maintain consistent humidity year-round
- Use humidifier in dry seasons
- Proper acclimation before installation

Swelling or Buckling

Symptoms:

- Planks raised or lifted
- Bubbling at seams
- Floor feels uneven

Possible Causes:

- Water damage (most common)
- High humidity
- Insufficient expansion gap
- Moisture from subfloor

Solutions:

- Identify and eliminate moisture source
- May need to replace damaged planks
- Professional assessment recommended

Prevention:

- Never wet mop or allow standing water
- Maintain proper humidity
- Ensure proper expansion gaps at installation

Scratches

Symptoms:

- Surface scratches in wear layer
- Scuff marks
- Concentrated scratches in traffic areas

Possible Causes:

- Grit and debris (most common)
- Furniture without pads
- Pet nails
- Dropped objects

Solutions:

- Light scratches: Try laminate repair kit or touch-up marker
- Deep scratches: Plank replacement may be needed
- Scuffs: Often cleanable with laminate cleaner

Prevention:

- Sweep daily

- Use felt pads on all furniture
- Keep pet nails trimmed
- Use area rugs in high-traffic zones

Chipping

Symptoms:

- Chips in wear layer, especially at edges
- Visible core material

Possible Causes:

- Impact damage (dropped objects)
- Improper installation
- Manufacturing defect

Solutions:

- Small chips: May be masked with repair kit
- Large chips: Plank replacement needed
- At seams: Check installation, may need professional

Prevention:

- Avoid dropping heavy or sharp objects
- Handle during installation carefully
- Use proper tools for cutting

Peaking at Seams

Symptoms:

- Raised points where planks meet
- Peak-like appearance at joints

Possible Causes:

- Insufficient expansion gap at walls
- Pinched flooring under molding
- Moisture exposure
- Flooring growing due to humidity

Solutions:

- Check and increase expansion gaps
- Ensure molding isn't pinning floor
- Address moisture source if present
- May need professional assessment

Prevention:

- Maintain proper expansion gaps
- Don't pin flooring under heavy objects
- Control humidity
- Follow installation guidelines

When to Seek Professional Help

Contact a flooring professional for:

- Widespread swelling or buckling
- Significant gapping that doesn't resolve
- Water damage assessment
- Multiple plank replacement
- Suspected subfloor moisture
- Warranty claim situations

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Cleaning Mistakes

Mistake	Why It's Harmful	Correct Approach
Wet mopping	Water damages HDF core	Barely damp mop only
Steam cleaning	Destroys laminate	Never use steam
Using vinegar	Damages wear layer	Laminate cleaner only
Wax or polish	Creates buildup	Never use
Too much cleaner	Leaves residue	Use sparingly, dry quickly
All-purpose cleaners	Wrong chemistry, residue	Laminate-specific only

Environmental Mistakes

Mistake	Why It's Harmful	Correct Approach
Ignoring humidity	Causes gapping or swelling	Maintain 35-55% RH
Extreme temperatures	Expansion/contraction issues	Maintain 60-80°F
Standing water	Swelling, buckling, damage	Wipe immediately
Excessive sun	Fading	Use window treatments

Protection Mistakes

Mistake	Why It's Harmful	Correct Approach
No furniture pads	Scratches	Felt pads on everything
Dragging furniture	Deep scratches	Always lift
Rubber-backed rugs	Can trap moisture/discolor	Non-rubber backing only
No entry mats	Tracks in grit and moisture	Comprehensive mat system
Hard plastic casters	Scratches, wear	Soft rubber casters or mats

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Maintenance Schedule Checklist

Daily Checklist

- □ Sweep or dust mop all traffic areas
- □ Wipe up any spills immediately
- □ Check entry mats, clean if needed
- □ Visual inspection for issues

Weekly Checklist

- □ Vacuum all areas (hard-floor setting)
- □ Light damp mop with approved cleaner
- □ Clean along walls and edges
- □ Check furniture pads
- □ Inspect for scratches or damage

Monthly Checklist

- □ Deep clean with approved cleaner
- □ Check humidity levels
- □ Move lightweight furniture to clean under
- □ Inspect and replace worn felt pads
- □ Check under area rugs

Quarterly Checklist

- □ Comprehensive cleaning
- □ Move furniture for thorough cleaning
- □ Check expansion gaps at walls
- □ Assess overall floor condition
- □ Rotate furniture and rugs slightly

Annual Checklist

- □ Complete condition assessment
- □ Check all expansion gaps
- □ Assess any wear patterns
- □ Review and replace entry mats if worn
- □ Review humidity records
- □ Consider professional assessment if needed

Warranty Considerations

Maintaining Warranty Coverage

To preserve your warranty:

- □ Follow manufacturer's care guidelines exactly
- □ Use only approved cleaning products
- □ Maintain humidity at 35-55% RH
- □ Maintain temperature at 60-80°F
- □ Use proper furniture protection
- □ Use non-rubber-backed mats only
- □ Never wet mop or steam clean
- □ Keep maintenance records

Actions That May Void Warranty

- Using steam cleaners or wet mopping
- Using vinegar, ammonia, wax, or prohibited products
- Failure to maintain proper humidity
- Using rubber-backed mats
- Water damage from improper care
- Improper installation or repairs
- Exceeding temperature limits with radiant heat
- Pet damage (typically excluded)

Documentation Recommendations

Keep records of:

- □ Purchase receipt and warranty documents
- □ Product specifications (brand, style, AC rating)
- □ Installation date and professional information
- □ Humidity/temperature records
- □ Professional service receipts
- □ Photos of any issues
- □ Correspondence about problems

Understanding Laminate Limitations

Cannot Be Refinished

Unlike hardwood, laminate flooring cannot be:

- Sanded
- Refinished
- Restained
- Re-coated

Why? The wear layer is a thin melamine coating over a photographic image. Once damaged, the only option is replacement.

Repair Options

Issue	Repair Option
Minor scratches	Touch-up markers, repair kits
Small chips	Repair putty, color-matched filler
Deep scratches	Plank replacement
Water damage	Plank replacement
Large damaged area	Section replacement

Planning for the Future

- Keep extra planks from installation for repairs
- Store in climate-controlled area
- Document product name and color for future ordering
- Address damage promptly to prevent spreading

Additional Resources

Industry Resources

- **North American Laminate Flooring Association (NALFA)**
  - Care guidelines
  - AC rating standards
  - Product testing information
- **European Producers of Laminate Flooring (EPLF)**
  - Technical standards
  - Classification information

Certification Programs

- **AC Rating System** - Abrasion classification ratings (AC1-AC5)
- **CARB Compliance** - Formaldehyde emissions standards
- **FloorScore** - Indoor air quality certification

Where to Find Help

- **Product questions:** Contact manufacturer
- **Cleaning products:** Use manufacturer-approved
- **Professional services:** Contact flooring retailer
- **Warranty questions:** Contact retailer or manufacturer
- **Replacement planks:** Original retailer or manufacturer

This care and maintenance guide is provided for general reference based on industry best practices for laminate flooring.