

KITCHENS and FLOATING FLOORS

What is a Floating Floor?

The term “floating floor” refers to a floor that is not glued to a subfloor, but “floats”, joined at the edges (using a click profile), to form a raft (or sheet) that covers the subfloor.

There are several types of flooring products that are made to be able to install floating, including:

- Engineered Timber Flooring : usually 12–15mm thick, installed as a floating floor over an underlay with DPM (Damp Proof Membrane). Can also be glued to the subfloor if preferred.
- Laminate Flooring : common thicknesses of 7mm / 8mm / 9.5mm and 12mm thick. Always installed as a floating floor over an underlay and DPM.
- Bamboo Flooring : usually 14mm thick and always installed as a floating floor over an underlay and DPM.
- Click LVT Flooring : usually 4–5mm thick and often has an integrated underlay on the back.

There are many advantages to a floating installation:

- Faster and easier to install means less time
- Easy to uplift – useful if any boards get damaged or floor needs replacing
- No adhesives required; a tight click system like Uniclic prevents gaps opening
- Flooring is prefinished so you can live on it immediately following installation
- Incizos make for colour-coordinated expansion trims and stair nosings

Important Information:

- All Floating floors need to be laid on to a ‘flat’ subfloor typically with variations of no more than 2mm over a 2m straight edge.
- Almost always, a continuous ‘Damp Proof Membrane’ (DPM) is required under the floating/overlay floor. This is usually part of the underlay used. This DPM must meet the vapour transmission standard of $SD > 75$.
- All floating floors need to have a perimeter expansion gap to their entire perimeter. This gap is usually between 8–12mm (larger gaps are required in larger floors or in areas that experience higher humidity levels). Flooring Trims (where flooring terminates to other floor coverings, ranch sliders etc.) or Skirting Boards (where flooring terminates to walls) are used to cover this perimeter expansion gap.
- Where skirtings are already fitted, three options are available : remove the existing skirting boards, install the floor and replace or re-fit the skirting boards; Undercut the existing skirting boards and install the flooring underneath; use a scotia (or quad trim) beading to cover the expansion gap.

KITCHEN KICKBOARDS

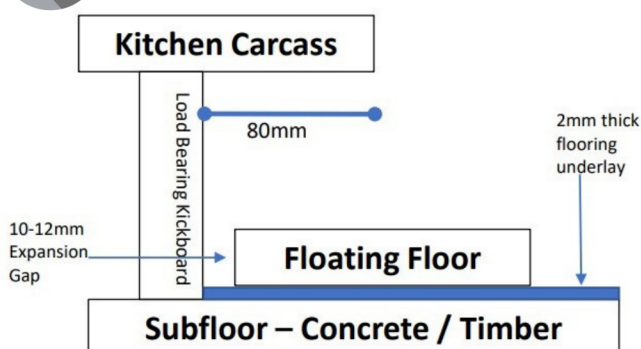
As all floating floors need to have a perimeter expansion gap to their entire perimeter, kitchens must not be installed on top of floating floors. In simple terms, the weight of kitchens / built-in units etc, will impede or disallow the natural and free movement of a floating floor across all seasons.

Kitchen cabinets/carcasses MUST be installed before the floating floor is installed.

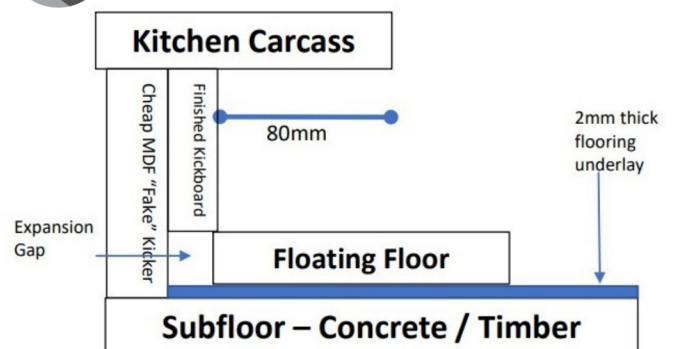
If you are replacing your kitchen at the same time you are putting in new flooring, it’s smart move to talk through the installation process with both your flooring supplier and your kitchen supplier, so that all parties understand what’s required to achieve the desired result.



Scotia or Quad required to cover expansion gap

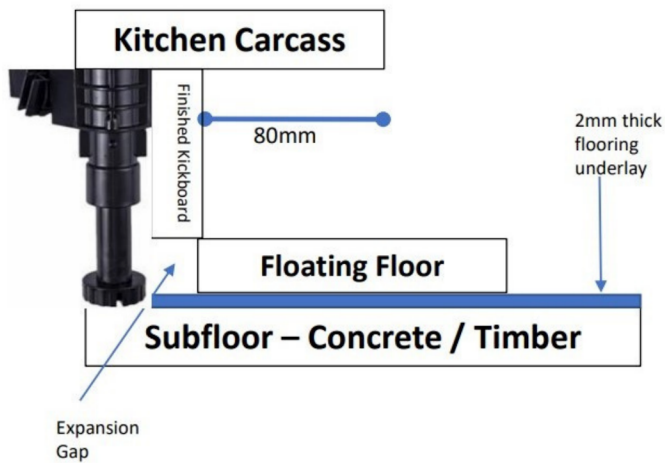


“Fake” kickboard takes the weight; finished kickboard hides the gap



As shown in the diagrams overleaf, a 'fake' kickboard can take the weight of the cabinet and also be sealed around the perimeter with silicon to prevent moisture ingress damaging your cabinets. A finished kickboard can be made to the correct height allowing for the flooring and underlay, plus 1mm to allow free movement. This can then be sealed with a flexible silicone.

REMEMBER – Laminate flooring is made with high density fibreboard (HDF); it's more moisture resistant than the MDF used to make kitchen cabinets!



Kitchen supplier cuts kickboard to correct height allowing for flooring and underlay; flooring installer fits kickboards after flooring and seals out moisture with flexible sealant.

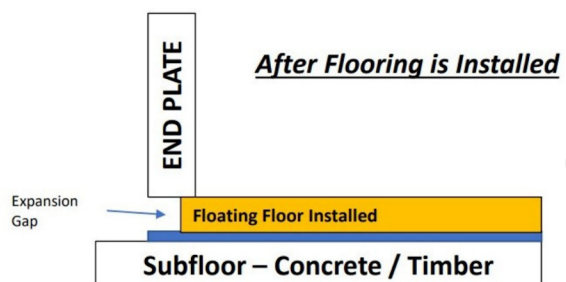
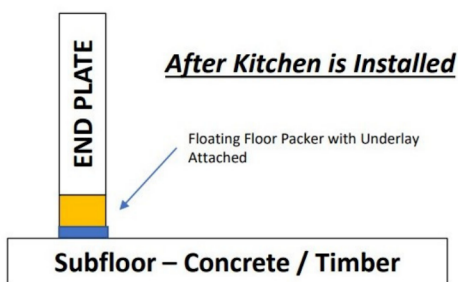
For the example shown above, best practice would be to cut the kickboard to the height needed for the flooring, underlay and an extra 0.5-1mm from the underside of the finished kickboard (allowing a bit of movement).

The kitchen supplier can install the clips at the correct height for the trimmed kickboard and leave the kickboards on-site. The flooring installer can then install the floor and clip the kickboards on after installation; finishing with a clear waterproof flexible silicone to seal out moisture which protects both floor and cabinetry.

KITCHEN END PANELS & WATERFALL ENDS

As with the example above, the kitchen supplier can also 'undercut' a rebate channel into the end panel to allow an expansion gap for the flooring to fit into, or simply adjust the legs higher to allow for the flooring.

If samples of the flooring and underlay are supplied to the kitchen company, they can be used as temporary packers (placeholders), making it very easy for the installer to later slide the flooring under the panel and create a nice neat finish. The flooring installer would then seal with flexible silicone which can be clear or coloured.



GUIDE TO BEST PRACTISE

- Ensure early on that there is clear communication with your builder and kitchen supplier regarding the flooring and sequence of work.
- Supply a sample of the chosen flooring and underlay to both the kitchen company and your builder.
- Ask if kickboards or adjustable height cabinet legs are used to support the cabinets.
- Talk through this info sheet with both your builder and kitchen supplier.
- Kitchen suppliers don't like having to return to site to fit kickboards and sealant – if the process above is followed, it shouldn't be necessary.