

INSTALLING INLAYS



INLAYS CAN BE INSTALLED in conjunction with a new hardwood floor, or they can be used to enhance an existing floor (see page 35).

Manufactured inlays

While many flooring contractors create their own inlays, several manufacturers produce these products—usually with a template and pattern bit that can be used to cut the flooring to the proper size and shape. Many manufacturers also produce custom-designed inlays and matching borders.



Installing manufactured inlays

- Always follow the inlay manufacturer's recommendations for installation. However, the following general guidelines can be useful.
- Before installation, check the product to ensure there are no missing parts or damage in shipping. If a shop drawing was required, compare the drawing to the inlay for accuracy in measurements, thickness and selection of species.
- Follow the inlay manufacturer's recommendations for acclimating the product prior to installation. If the product requires acclimation, the HVAC system needs to be operating, with temperature and humidity levels acceptable for normal living conditions.

- Position the inlay by taking into consideration the walls, vents, openings and furniture. Have the client approve and sign off on the position.
- Inlays should be installed after the floor is laid to ensure a proper fit into the floor.



- Installation can be started by placing the inlay on the floor and marking the outline with a pencil. Use magnets to find any fasteners along the outline and mark them. Most companies offer a template, thereby reducing the chance of making bad cuts outside the proposed area for the inlay. Pay attention to small pieces of the floor that may be on the edge of the cutout area.
- To assist in smoother routing, it may help to sand the adjacent area prior to routing.



- Fasten the template to the field flooring. The template can be fastened with double-sided tape, or by finish nailing into the field flooring between the floor boards.



- Using a plunge router and bit (see photo inset), cut away the existing flooring on the inside of the template in a clockwise direction, starting with a plunge depth of $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Ensure that the router bearing rides against the template. Rout in at least three to four passes at increasing depths to avoid overheating and damaging the router bit. Continue this process until the router reaches the subfloor.
- Denser wood species may require four or more passes.



- If you expose nails on any pass, use a nail set to drive the nail further into the floor and out of the way of the router bit.



- Use a sharp chisel or corner chisel to clean up areas, such as corners, not removed by the router

bit. Vacuum the subfloor to remove all debris.

- **IMPORTANT:** Install the inlay as soon as possible after routing the outline; delaying inlay installation may allow the field to close up around the outline.
- Dry fit the inlay to ensure proper fit. Make sure the inlay is flush with the floor surface. Use packaging tape or similar tape across the back of the inlay to create handles extending above the sides that can be used to lift the inlay out of the opening after dry fitting.
- Unfinished inlays often include knockouts (loose pieces), which can be removed to allow screwing the inlay to the subfloor. In this case, remove the knockouts before installing the inlay.



- Apply adhesive to the subfloor in a thickness that will match the overall elevation of the floor. Follow the inlay manufacturer's recommendations on proper adhesives.
- Install the inlay, weighting it to ensure a good fit, and let the inlay set up in the adhesive. Follow the adhesive manufacturer's recommendation for ventilation, application and drying time.
- If the inlay contains knockouts, screw the inlay to the subfloor in the knockout areas. The knockouts should be glued into place in the inlay.
- If there are gaps, use the sliver method described in "Specialty Installations" on page 32 or use a wood filler that will match the color of the wood species.