

Help and advice



Sid Bourne on installing finger block floors

Laying out floors: Don't go to the wall!

I WAS on site with a wood floor installer some time back to help him resolve a sanding issue. The product was a simple finger block floor which seems to be making a comeback.

The finger block was an unfinished solid oak mixture of red and white oak which had been glued down and after curing was sanded and finished.

The issue was a simple repair to a small area of lacquer which had a few bits of dirt in it. As I normally do, I started to look around at his workmanship without making it obvious. I noticed he had not aligned the floor out correctly. But I didn't mention this to him as I was more concerned about another matter.

Mrs W, the consumer – who at that point was giving us a lovely cup of tea – explained that she was unhappy with how the finger blocks ran out along the wall. It bothered me too! And she did not like the look of the short cut-offs along this wall.

As much as she had tried to ignore it, Mr W told us, each time she sat down to watch TV the flooring was glaring at her.

I kept quiet and let the installer explain why this was. He stated that the wall had run out and, unfortunately, it was unavoidable where you finish with your last cut.

Then he turned to me. 'Is that not true Sid?' I just stood there not knowing how to respond. So I said: 'I'm sorry I have to make a quick call,' giving him a wink to follow me.

I have to admit that he gave me a funny look and followed me out. When we were out of the house I laughingly assured him that I did not fancy him; I just wanted him to follow me to discuss the problem in private.

I informed him that Mrs W was right; if she wanted to be really awkward she could have asked him to take up all the flooring, because it was running out a mile.

Then I asked the installer: 'Did you ask Mrs W which wall would be best to put smaller cuts against or did you just decide?'

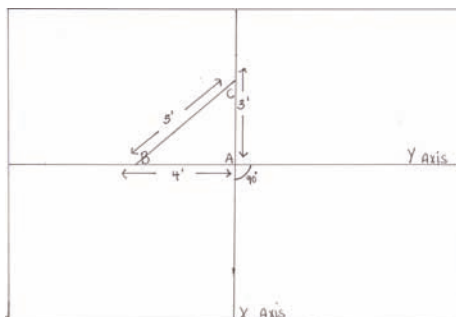
You can guess the answer. He decided on his own. This installer was a nice guy and he had made a genuine mistake.

He wanted to put things right, but obviously didn't want to fork out to replace all the flooring; and this was quite a big installation, covering 45sq m.

We went back into the house for him to explain the situation. Luckily Mrs W was understanding, and she thanked him for his honesty. As long as it was put right to the best of his ability, then she was sure she would be happy. What a nice customer!

I could not stay and help him, but I showed him how to take back the floor; how to make cuts on each adjoining row so it would take out the running out; and how to leave a nearly full finger block on long wall.

In a Q and A in a future issue of **CFJ**, I will show how this is done. But try not to make this same mistake.



Marking out

I interrogated the installer under the 100watt bulb and asked him to show me how he started. He pointed to the wall he had started on and said: 'I started there, and finished over there.'

'No measurements then?' I asked.

'No,' he said.

I then asked the wood floor installer who had trained him. 'An old fella many years ago,' he answered.

'Is that all the training you have ever had?'

'Unfortunately, yes,' he replied, and added:

'But I don't have many problems when I nail down them logs. But I have not done these before, so I just got stuck in.'

His words 'them logs', by the way, means plank flooring.

Believe me when I say that you could not get angry with this guy. He was an honest friendly person, but he had been guided the wrong way and had never been trained in his life.

I suggested that he went on some courses to get to understand exactly how this should be done. He explained that he lives in this little village and really only worked around these parts. He knew most people around here and they didn't mind the odd mistake.

I started driving away and got only 200 yards down the road before turning back. I said that if he could wait for a couple of weeks, I would help him get started with this job.

He was very grateful, saying: 'That's great; I'll get the missus to cook you some dinner.'

I said not to bother with the dinner, but please would he explain to the customer what was happening. He said he said don't worry Mrs W is fine.

I went back on site with him and, as promised, I started off the first four rows for him. I then showed him how to do the rebate cuts and then let him have a go. His first cuts were perfect, so there is hope for him, and he promised to book himself on some courses in the near future.

'Let me know how you get on,' I told him as I was leaving. A few days later he phoned. Mrs W was over the moon!

I now speak to the installer on a regular basis; he asks me so many questions which I don't mind at all. He had done wrong, but he put it right.

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This error in marking out is more common than you think. How you mark out for this type of product is shown in the diagram (above).

Remember never to start off a wall before explaining to the consumer. Ask which walls are the best to put smaller cuts against, if required. For example you may wish to put cuts on a wall which will be covered by furniture or units.

Start by snapping a chalk line through the centre of the room. To do this, measure two opposite walls and use the middle point as end points (**see Y**).

Off this centre point do the 3 4 5 like you learnt at school so you should now measure 3ft off Y and put a pencil mark. Then 4ft off X and put a pencil mark measure from your 3ft mark to the 4ft mark and this should make 5ft you now have a perfect right angle.

All measurements start off these marks. By following this advice, if anything runs out you can tell the consumer that the room is not square and demonstrate the 3 4 5 rule.

Should you have very large areas you simply mark out double of the 3 4 5. For example 3 becomes 6, 4 becomes 8, and 5 becomes 10. But for normal rooms the 3 4 5 is fine.

To install on the diagonal, just measure an equal distance along lines X and Y from point A; and from these marks scribe arcs of equal distance in the general direction of where the arcs will intersect.

This point will determine the 45 degree layout. Remember these lines are central and at perfect angles. Depending on the size of tile or pattern, these lines can be moved to suit the floorcovering so as to get the best visual appearance.

But please always use these lines to measure from. Don't use the walls! **CFJ Sid Bourne is technical director at Grundorf Terhurne and has over 25 years of installation experience.**

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