

Installing Laminate Floor and Carpet

Mike Teets July 2003

Don't: Stay away from all foam backed carpet (foam attached to carpet) as it is mostly very cheap and won't hold up to the temp extremes and traffic of the RV.

Never use tack strip with foam or rubber backed carpet. Tacking carpet around the edge is marginally acceptable... same temp extremes are going to be hard on most modern carpet backings. New backings are no longer natural jute fiber but instead a synthetic with names like action-back, etc. These are plastics that stretch in heat and shrink in cold.

Do not attempt to use carpet tack strip with power or kick stretching, you are asking for trouble as the carpet will pull off the strip with such small area, coach flexing and the temperature changes.

Do: The best method for a motorhome is a double-glue installation. This means the pad is glued to the floor then the carpet is glued to the pad. (*There is a special pad for this with a glueing scrim on both sides*). This is typical of hotel carpet installations so find a commercial or contract supplier in your area for supplies.

- Pull the seats and wall surfaces at floor level.
- Remove the cabinet toe-kick in front of heater and any trim that may have been added over the years.
- Removed the staples from the previous installation. (*If someone ever tells you that stapling the entire installation of carpet is the right way to install, find another installer*). With the temperature fluctuations and flexibility of the coach, you will have wrinkles and a tough time replacing later.
- Depending on the condition of the floor
I put a layer of 1/4 luan plywood over the main floor. I considered using a marine grade but it was not immediately available to me and we had a trip planned in a few weeks. I did this to make the floor more solid especially where some soft spots had developed... mostly around poor construction techniques at the factory. I used a short drywall screw to secure to floor about every 8 inches. These screws would not penetrate the existing floor into the insulation.
- After finishing the preparation, I installed an Armstrong laminate floor in the kitchen and hall area.



The following is a picture looking back at the floor.



Chose is a commercial grade level loop with good sun resistance.

- With a little effort you can find a really good commercial remnant in a suitable color for less than \$200. You must go to the smaller contract shops as most of the big box home retail stores just have residential grades.

Caution: *they will often call all level-loops a commercial carpet.*

- Using commercial grade carpet is better as it is typically easier to clean especially for oil based products tracked in from the outside. *(It is unfortunately also a little harder to work as the backing and surface are stiffer and heavier than typical residential weights)*

A neat trick is to work it on a really hot, sunny day. Leave the material lay unrolled on a blacktop driveway until you are ready to install... then you get about 30 minutes of easy working installation with soft backing before it cools again.



I used a double glue technique... or sometimes called double stick pad. This is not a pre-glued double stick like they had during the 70's for do-it-yourselfers. It is a relatively firm pad with a gluing scrim on both sides. *See links at the bottom of the page for references to other flooring how-tos.*

- First you spread the floor, place the pad and then glue the pad surface again after cutting in the carpet. *(As you can see below I left the pad about 1 inch short of the wood edge).*
- This is to "turn and tack" the edge of the carpet. Just fold over about an inch and staple to floor. *(I used this technique around the engine hatch also.)*

- This does mean you will need a little extra... i.e. after you cut the engine hatch hole, leave enough to turn and tack, you will need another piece larger than the hatch to turn and tack.
- Make sure you keep the carpet "grain" running the right direction. (*Mark the back with a pencil pointing in the same direction on all of your cuts if you are not experienced at identifying the grain of carpet*).
- You should always "walk up" the grain... i.e. the yarns should be leaning toward the doorway, perpendicular to the longer length of the room (not the left and right sides of coach).



Here is the method I used to finish the hatch area.

- Cut the carpet a few inches overlapping the hatch hole with the hatch removed.
- Turn and tack the carpet around this edge. (*Another option is to take the carpet to a carpet store that has a binding machine and bind the edges*). Binding is the edge you typically see on throw rugs. While that method would work, it would leave a more visible edge when complete.
- The turn and tack method works best with a cut pile carpet and the edge will virtually disappear. The stiff level loop I used shows more although still very acceptable.
- Using an electric tacker with brass tacks is the best. *Make sure you "nuzzle" the head in between the yarns so you don't tack down the face yarns leaving dents around the edge*. One tack every 4 to 6 inches is probably sufficient.



- Cut a second piece about 8 inches larger than the hatch in both directions. *To make sure to get a good match.* Even on a piece without a pattern like this one,
- Take care to line up the grain direction as well as make sure the loops are lined up straight and even with the non-hatch carpet.
- Cut the carpet to about a 1 1/2 inch overlap and turn and tack the carpet to the hatch.

There are two options on the hatch latches.

1. Turn and glue edges but leave enough unattached to pull up for access
 - Use a strong commercial carpet hot glue to permanently fold over the edge in the corner. You can see the pad peeking through on the corner... Notice that the pad is cut back to the edge of the folded under carpet. This keeps the entire surface at the same level. *(This is visible in the picture a few up also).*
2. Put the entire latch on top of the carpet and have it visible on the finish



There are lots of alternatives that many have used in RVs but if you want to do it once, have it stay where you put it and have a trouble free long life, stick with this method.

A few links to professional carpet sites:

http://www.fcimag.com/CDA/ArticleInformation/features/BNP_Features_Item/0,2988,117147,00.html

<http://www.aatglue.com/DoubleGlueInstallationSpecs.html>

<http://www.lfishman.com/Library/Catalog/Cushion.pdf> (look at the "why double glue" section).