

Removing Linoleum Yourself

Are you thinking about removing linoleum in your home? It's not easy, but doable. Removing linoleum from your home can be quite a task, a lot of it depends on how old the linoleum is, and the kind of adhesive that was used to fasten it down. Sometimes, if it's solidly bound, and not cracking or heaving, people decide to leave it underneath whatever else they are laying down. Nonetheless, most home owners choose to start from scratch, and that means a lot of elbow grease, no matter which method of removal you decide on.

To start with, it's unlikely that you'll be able to just remove the linoleum and adhesive all at once. What's under the linoleum can be part of the problem, especially if it's wood. Concrete floors can withstand a lot more in the way of rough treatment, including the type of scraper you use. Most people will use paint scrapers, although scrapers with a razor blade are usually more efficient. Be ready to break some blades if the adhesive is hard, and you're working on concrete.

One piece of advice is not to try and remove everything at once. Many people instead cut the linoleum into strips or sections, and peel that off. You should pull up most of the surface, and likely a good portion of the backing. Doing it this way will make it easier to get at the adhesive underneath as well.

Once you are down to the scraps, there are two basic methods to aid your scraping efforts. One is to use some kind of solvent or remover. A popular brand is Krud Kutter, which appears to work very well, according to the customer feedback comments. Follow instructions on the label of whatever product you employ, and wear gloves to protect your hands. Do a small section at a time, and then go on to the next one.

Other home repairers report success with using nothing more advanced than boiling or very hot water. The water can be poured directly on the backing and adhesive, a small area at a time, left to soak, and then scraped up. Alternatively, you can fold an old towel and lay it on top of a section of adhesive, pour boiling water over it, let it set, remove and then scrape.

One method that may help you remove linoleum, then, is to heat it. Select a very inconspicuous area, such as behind a door, to try it. Heat the adhesive with a hair dryer and scrape it up with a straight-blade scraper (such as a stiff putty knife with a beveled edge). Push the scraper in the direction of the grain of the wood if you are uncovering a hardwood floor. Keep a pan or some other container handy to drop the scrapings into -- one that is unlikely to either melt or ignite when coming in contact with hot materials.

You may wish to move up to using a heat gun after you become comfortable with this process. If so, be careful not to overheat the wood and char it. You should also know that using this technique may allow some of the softened mastic to flow into the joints between the floorboards. Keeping the heated area small, constantly moving the heat source and scraping as quickly as possible will all help improve the outcome.

Bear in mind that this trick will never remove all of the old adhesive. Trying to scrape up all the old adhesive is likely to damage the wood. Scrape up the amount that will come up readily, sweep and vacuum, and consider your next step. In some cases a gentle sanding may be best. In other cases you may be able to scrub enough of the residue off with rags dampened with turpentine, mineral spirits or some similar solvent to get the floor ready to refinish. If you were going to apply a new covering that required new mastic, seal the wood and go ahead.