

OTTAWA FLOOR INSTALL

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# Maintenance & Care

Cleaning, protecting, repairing, and maintaining  
your floors

9 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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## Q1

### The LVP near the entry constantly gets hit with salt and grit — how do we prevent long-term edge damage?

**Luxury vinyl plank edges are vulnerable to salt and grit damage, but proper protection and maintenance can prevent long-term deterioration.** The key is creating barriers and establishing cleaning routines that remove corrosive materials before they can penetrate seams or wear down the wear layer.

**Entry mats are your first line of defense** - place both exterior and interior mats to capture salt and debris before it reaches your LVP. Use a coarse outdoor mat for initial scraping and an absorbent indoor mat for final moisture removal. The indoor mat should extend at least 6 feet into the entry to catch what gets past the first barrier. Replace or clean these mats frequently during winter months when salt use is heaviest.

**Daily maintenance becomes critical during salt season.** Sweep or vacuum the entry area daily to remove grit that can act like sandpaper on your flooring. Use a damp mop with pH-neutral cleaner specifically designed for LVP - never use harsh chemicals or excessive water that could seep into seams. Pay special attention to the edges where planks meet, as salt residue tends to accumulate in these joints.

**In Ottawa's harsh winters, consider applying a penetrating sealer to LVP seams** in high-traffic entry areas. While LVP is inherently water-resistant, the locking joints can be vulnerable points where salt water might penetrate. Some contractors recommend a clear, flexible sealant designed for vinyl flooring to protect these vulnerable edges.

**For maximum protection, install a transition strip or threshold** at the entry point if you don't already have one. This creates a physical barrier and helps contain salt and moisture to a smaller, more manageable area. Quality LVP with a thick wear layer (20+ mil) will also resist salt damage better than budget options.

For a comprehensive assessment of your entry area and professional recommendations on protecting your investment, Ottawa Floor Install can evaluate your specific situation and suggest the most effective protection strategy for Ottawa's winter conditions.

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## Q2

### How do we prevent furniture dents on vinyl plank?

**Furniture dents on vinyl plank flooring are preventable with the right protective measures and proper installation techniques.** While vinyl plank is more resilient than hardwood, heavy furniture can still create

permanent indentations, especially on softer vinyl products.

**Furniture pads are your first line of defense.** Use felt pads under all furniture legs, choosing pads that are slightly larger than the furniture foot. For heavy items like pianos, refrigerators, or sectional sofas, upgrade to furniture cups or wide-base protectors that distribute weight over a larger surface area. Replace felt pads every 6-12 months as they compress and lose effectiveness over time.

**The quality and thickness of your vinyl plank matters significantly.** Rigid core vinyl (SPC) and luxury vinyl with wear layers of 12-20 mil offer better dent resistance than standard flexible vinyl. During installation, a quality underlayment adds cushioning that helps absorb impact and reduces indentation risk. Never skip the underlayment, even with vinyl that claims to have attached backing.

**In Ottawa's climate, temperature fluctuations can make vinyl more susceptible to denting.** Cold temperatures make vinyl more brittle and prone to permanent impressions. Maintain consistent indoor temperatures between 65-75°F, and avoid moving heavy furniture during extreme cold snaps when the material is at its most vulnerable.

**For existing dents, gentle heat application sometimes helps.** Use a hair dryer on low heat while gently working the area with your fingers - this works best on minor impressions in flexible vinyl products. However, deep dents in rigid core products are typically permanent.

For professional vinyl plank installation with proper underlayment selection, request a quote from Ottawa Floor Install. We'll help you choose the right product thickness and protection strategy for your furniture and lifestyle needs.

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Q3

## Is it true that laminate cannot be refinished? What happens when it gets scratched?

**Yes, it's absolutely true - laminate flooring cannot be refinished like hardwood.** Laminate has a protective wear layer on top of a photographic image, so sanding would destroy the floor's appearance entirely.

When laminate gets scratched, your repair options depend on the severity of the damage. **Minor surface scratches** can often be addressed with laminate repair kits that include color-matched putty or markers - these work well for small scratches and scuffs that don't go through the wear layer. For slightly deeper scratches, some homeowners have success with laminate floor polish or even a small amount of clear nail polish to fill and seal minor gouges.

**Deeper scratches or gouges** that penetrate the wear layer are much more challenging. Individual planks can be replaced if you have leftover flooring from the original installation, but this requires carefully removing the damaged plank without affecting surrounding boards. With click-lock laminate systems, this sometimes means starting from the nearest wall and working your way to the damaged plank.

In Ottawa's market, **prevention is your best strategy** with laminate flooring. Use furniture pads, area rugs in high-traffic zones, and avoid dragging heavy items across the floor. Quality laminate with a thicker wear layer (AC4 or AC5 rating) will resist scratching much better than builder-grade options, though it costs more upfront.

**When scratches become extensive**, replacement is typically more cost-effective than attempting multiple repairs. Modern laminate installation in Ottawa runs \$4-\$10 per square foot installed, making it an affordable option when it's time for a fresh start. For a free estimate on laminate flooring replacement or to explore more scratch-resistant options like luxury vinyl plank, request a quote from Ottawa Floor Install.

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#### Q4

## My old subfloor has some soft spots - should I repair or replace it before installing new floors?

**You absolutely need to address those soft spots before installing any new flooring.** Soft spots indicate moisture damage, rot, or structural weakness that will only get worse and could cause your new floors to fail prematurely.

**Identifying the extent of damage** is the first step. Soft spots in subfloor are typically caused by water damage from leaks, poor ventilation, or moisture infiltration. A licensed contractor should inspect the affected areas to determine if the damage is surface-level or extends to the floor joists below. They'll use a moisture meter to check current moisture levels and may need to remove sections of subfloor to assess the underlying structure.

**Repair versus replacement** depends on the severity and extent of damage. Small isolated soft spots (less than a few square feet) can often be cut out and patched with new plywood or OSB subflooring. However, if the soft areas are extensive, if there's any mold present, or if the floor joists are affected, full replacement of the damaged section is necessary. In Ottawa's climate, moisture issues are common in basements and areas near exterior walls, so thorough remediation is crucial.

**Proper repair involves several steps** beyond just replacing the subflooring. The underlying moisture source must be identified and fixed first - whether it's a plumbing leak, poor vapor barrier, or inadequate ventilation. The subfloor replacement must match the existing thickness (typically 5/8" or 3/4" plywood/OSB) and be properly fastened to joists. Any height differences need to be leveled, and in some cases, a moisture barrier or additional underlayment may be required.

**For your new flooring installation**, addressing subfloor issues now prevents costly callbacks and warranty problems later. Most flooring warranties are voided if installed over damaged or inadequate subfloor. The Ontario Building Code requires subfloors to be structurally sound and properly moisture-protected, especially in below-grade applications.

For a thorough subfloor assessment and proper repair before your flooring installation, request a consultation from Ottawa Floor Install. Licensed contractors can identify all issues and ensure your subfloor meets manufacturer requirements for your new flooring.

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#### Q5

## My dog has scratched up my hardwood - will luxury vinyl plank (LVP) hold up better with large dogs?

**Yes, luxury vinyl plank will definitely hold up much better with large dogs than traditional hardwood flooring.** LVP is specifically engineered to resist scratches, dents, and moisture damage that pets commonly cause.

**Scratch and Dent Resistance:** LVP has a protective wear layer (typically 12-20 mil for residential) that's much more resistant to pet claws than hardwood's surface finish. Even large dogs running and playing won't easily scratch quality LVP. The rigid core construction also resists denting from dropped toys or food bowls, unlike softer wood species that show every impact.

**Moisture Protection:** This is where LVP really shines for pet owners. Unlike hardwood that can warp, cup, or stain from pet accidents, 100% waterproof LVP won't be damaged by spills or accidents. You can clean thoroughly without worrying about moisture seeping into seams or causing permanent damage. Many Ottawa homeowners with pets specifically choose LVP for mudrooms, kitchens, and main living areas for this reason.

**Maintenance and Longevity:** LVP requires minimal maintenance compared to hardwood - no refinishing, no special cleaners, and scratches that do occur are typically in the wear layer only. Quality LVP can last 15-20 years even with active pets, while scratched hardwood may need refinishing every 3-5 years in high-traffic pet areas.

**Design Options:** Modern LVP offers incredibly realistic wood looks, so you won't sacrifice the aesthetic appeal of hardwood. Rigid core LVP (SPC) provides the most durability for large dogs, typically running \$6-12 per square foot installed in the Ottawa market.

For a pet-friendly flooring upgrade that will handle your large dog's activity, LVP is an excellent choice. Want to explore waterproof LVP options for your specific space? Ottawa Floor Install can show you samples and provide a free estimate for your project.

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Q6

## What flooring shows the least dust, pet hair, and dirt between cleanings?

**Luxury vinyl plank (LVP) and sheet vinyl show the least dust, pet hair, and dirt between cleanings** due to their completely smooth, non-porous surfaces that don't trap particles like textured or grouted floors do.

**Smooth vinyl flooring** is the clear winner for hiding everyday mess. The seamless surface means dust and pet hair sit on top rather than settling into grooves or texture, making them less visible until your next cleaning. Unlike

laminates with its beveled edges or tile with grout lines, vinyl creates an uninterrupted surface where debris can't accumulate in crevices.

**Engineered hardwood with a smooth, satin finish** comes in second, especially in medium tones like natural oak or walnut that naturally camouflage dust and pet hair. The key is avoiding high-gloss finishes that show every speck of dust, and steering clear of heavily textured or wire-brushed surfaces that trap particles. Hand-scraped or distressed hardwood actually hides dirt well due to the varied surface texture, but can be harder to clean thoroughly.

**Color strategy matters significantly** in Ottawa homes dealing with seasonal dust and pet hair. Medium brown tones hide the most - they're dark enough to camouflage light dust but light enough that dark pet hair doesn't stand out starkly. Pure white or very dark floors show everything, while gray-toned flooring splits the difference on most debris types.

For Ottawa pet owners dealing with winter salt, mud, and year-round shedding, **100% waterproof LVP with attached underlayment** offers the best combination of easy maintenance and mess-hiding properties. The slightly cushioned surface is also gentler on pet joints and more comfortable underfoot during our long winters.

Want to see samples of low-maintenance flooring options that work well with pets? Ottawa Floor Install can show you the most practical choices for your specific lifestyle and home.

Q7

## My floors have deep scratches and dents - will refinishing fix them all?

**Refinishing can fix most scratches and many dents, but not all damage.** The key factor is whether the damage goes through the wood or just affects the finish layer.

**Surface scratches** that only go through the polyurethane finish will completely disappear during refinishing. These are the white or light-colored marks you see that don't catch your fingernail when you run it across them. **Deeper scratches** that go into the wood itself will be significantly reduced but may still be faintly visible after refinishing, especially in certain lighting conditions.

**Dents and gouges** present more challenges. Small dents can often be steamed out during the refinishing process - the moisture and heat cause the compressed wood fibers to swell back up. However, **deep gouges where wood has been removed** cannot be fixed by refinishing alone. These require wood filler or, in severe cases, individual board replacement before refinishing.

**In Ottawa's climate**, hardwood floors commonly develop scratches from sand and salt tracked in during winter months. Most of this seasonal wear responds very well to refinishing. However, damage from pet claws, furniture legs, or dropped objects may require additional repair work. A professional assessment can determine which scratches will disappear completely and which might need pre-refinishing repairs.

The **sanding process removes about 1/32" to 1/16" of wood surface**, which eliminates most surface-level damage. If your floors have been refinished multiple times before, there may be limits to how much more material can be safely removed.

For a professional assessment of your floor damage and refinishing options, Ottawa Floor Install offers free consultations to evaluate what repairs are needed alongside refinishing work.

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Q8

## My stairs creak under the carpet. Will replacing the carpet fix the noise?

**Replacing the carpet alone will not fix creaking stairs** - the noise is coming from the stair structure underneath, not the carpet itself. The carpet is actually helping to muffle the creaks that would be even more noticeable on bare wood.

**Stair creaks are typically caused by loose connections** between the stair treads (the horizontal part you step on) and the risers (vertical back part), or between the treads and the stringers (side supports). Over time, the nails

or screws holding these components together can work loose due to the constant foot traffic and seasonal wood movement. Temperature and humidity changes cause the wood to expand and contract, which gradually loosens the fasteners.

**In Ottawa's climate, seasonal movement is particularly common** due to our significant temperature swings and indoor heating cycles. Many homes built in the 1970s-1990s have stairs that develop creaks as the original fasteners loosen. The good news is that this is usually a structural maintenance issue rather than a safety concern, though it should be addressed properly.

**To actually fix the creaking, you'll need to re-secure the loose connections** from underneath the stairs (if accessible) or from above by driving screws through the treads into the risers and stringers. This work should be done before installing new flooring. A qualified contractor can identify exactly where the movement is occurring and reinforce those connections with appropriate screws or brackets.

**When you do replace the flooring, consider your options carefully.** Carpet will continue to muffle any remaining minor creaks, while hard surfaces like hardwood or luxury vinyl plank will make any structural noise more noticeable. Many Ottawa homeowners choose to install hardwood stair treads with matching nosing, which typically runs \$80-150 per tread installed, depending on the wood species and complexity.

For a proper assessment of your stair structure and flooring options, request a consultation from Ottawa Floor Install. We can evaluate the underlying cause of the creaking and recommend the best approach for both structural repairs and your new flooring installation.

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Q9

## **We have small kids and a messy household - what floor is easiest to clean?**

**Luxury vinyl plank (LVP) or waterproof laminate are your best friends with small kids** - they're 100% waterproof, scratch-resistant, and can handle spills, muddy shoes, and toy drops without permanent damage.

**Luxury vinyl plank** tops the list for busy families because it's completely waterproof, not just water-resistant. Juice spills, potty training accidents, and tracked-in snow won't penetrate the surface or seep into seams. Modern LVP looks incredibly realistic - many guests can't tell the difference from real hardwood. The rigid core versions (SPC) are particularly durable against scratches from toy cars and dropped items. Daily cleaning is as simple as sweeping and damp mopping with any household cleaner.

**Waterproof laminate** runs a close second, offering similar benefits at a slightly lower price point. Look for AC4 or AC5 rated products that can handle heavy residential traffic. The newer waterproof laminates have sealed cores and edges, making them nearly as spill-proof as LVP. Both options come in wide planks that minimize seams where dirt can collect.

**Porcelain tile** is another excellent choice, especially in mudrooms and kitchens. It's completely waterproof, stain-proof, and virtually indestructible. However, grout lines require more maintenance and can harbor bacteria if not properly sealed. Large format tiles (12"x24" or larger) reduce grout lines significantly.

In Ottawa's climate, these waterproof options also handle the constant wet-dry cycles from snow boots and winter gear without warping or cupping like traditional hardwood might. Most families find they can maintain these floors with just daily sweeping and weekly mopping - no special cleaners or refinishing required.

For a free consultation on kid-friendly flooring options that fit your specific space and budget, Ottawa Floor Install can help you choose the most practical solution for your busy household.

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**Disclaimer:** This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Floor Install. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any construction or renovation project. Information is current as of March 15, 2026 and may change. Visit [ottawafloorinstall.ca](https://ottawafloorinstall.ca) for the latest answers.