

NEW BRUNSWICK FLOORING

Laminate Flooring

Laminate flooring installation, click-lock systems, water-resistant options, and budget-friendly alternatives for NB homeowners

19 Expert Answers from Floor IQ

newbrunswickflooring.com/construction-brain

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Can I install laminate flooring in a NB commercial office space and will it meet wear requirements for business use?

Laminate flooring can work in NB commercial offices, but you need commercial-grade laminate with **AC4 or AC5 wear ratings to handle business traffic levels**. Standard residential laminate (AC1-AC3) will show wear patterns, scratches, and edge damage within 6-12 months in a commercial setting.

Commercial-Grade Laminate Requirements

For NB office spaces, specify laminate with an **AC4 rating minimum** for moderate commercial traffic, or **AC5 for heavy traffic areas** like reception zones and main corridors. These ratings indicate the laminate can withstand 4,000-6,000+ revolutions on standardized wear tests. Commercial laminate also features thicker wear layers (0.3-0.5mm vs 0.1-0.2mm residential), more durable aluminum oxide surface coatings, and reinforced click-lock systems designed for furniture loads and rolling chairs.

Moisture Considerations for NB Commercial Spaces

New Brunswick's Maritime humidity creates additional challenges in commercial buildings. Many NB office buildings use economical heating systems that create significant winter/summer humidity swings, and older commercial buildings often have concrete slab foundations with moisture migration issues. Choose **waterproof core laminate** (SPC or WPC core instead of standard HDF) for any ground-level or basement commercial space. The waterproof core prevents swelling if moisture migrates through the concrete or if minor spills occur around coffee stations and water coolers.

Installation and Performance Factors

Commercial laminate installation requires **proper subfloor preparation** and **commercial-grade underlayment** with sound dampening properties - important in multi-tenant NB office buildings where noise transmission matters. Plan for **furniture protection** (chair mats under rolling chairs, felt pads under heavy furniture) and **entry matting systems** to minimize tracked-in moisture and debris during NB's muddy spring months and winter salt season.

Cost and Alternatives

Commercial-grade laminate runs **\$4-\$8/sq ft materials** in NB, with installation adding **\$3-\$5/sq ft**. For high-traffic NB commercial spaces, consider **commercial LVP** (\$5-\$10/sq ft) as an alternative - it offers superior moisture resistance, dent resistance, and can be replaced in sections if damaged. **Commercial carpet tile** (\$3-\$6/sq ft) remains popular in NB offices for comfort, sound absorption, and easy replacement of stained or worn sections.

When to Hire a Professional

Commercial flooring installation requires professional expertise for proper subfloor assessment, moisture testing, and compliance with building occupancy requirements. Many NB commercial buildings have specific installation timing requirements to minimize business disruption, and commercial installations often require coordination with building management and other trades.

Find commercial flooring contractors experienced with NB office buildings through the New Brunswick Construction Network directory.

Q2

How do I repair water damage to laminate flooring near a NB bathroom or kitchen without replacing the entire floor?

Water-damaged laminate planks must be replaced — laminate cannot be repaired once the HDF core absorbs moisture and swells. However, you can often replace just the affected planks without redoing the entire floor if you act quickly and the damage is localized.

Assessing the Damage

First, determine the extent of water penetration. In New Brunswick's humid climate, water damage spreads faster through laminate than in drier provinces because the ambient moisture keeps the HDF core from drying out completely. Look for visible swelling at plank edges, soft or spongy spots when you walk, gaps between planks that weren't there before, or a musty odour indicating moisture trapped in the subfloor.

Remove baseboards around the affected area and check if water reached the expansion gap at the walls. If water pooled against the baseboards, it likely wicked under multiple rows of planks. Use a moisture meter to test planks beyond the visibly damaged area — readings above 12% moisture content indicate the plank needs replacement.

Replacing Individual Planks

For floating laminate floors (the most common type), you'll need to disassemble the floor from the nearest wall to reach the damaged planks. This sounds daunting, but it's straightforward if you work methodically. Start by removing all furniture and carefully lifting planks row by row, keeping them in order for reinstallation.

If the damaged planks are near a wall, you may only need to lift 2-3 rows. For damage in the middle of the room, you'll need to disassemble half the floor — this is where the project becomes time-intensive enough that full replacement might make more sense.

Critical Steps for NB Conditions

Before reinstalling any planks, address the moisture source completely. In NB bathrooms and kitchens, this often means improving ventilation (exhaust fans), sealing gaps around tubs and sinks, or fixing leaking plumbing. The Maritime climate means any residual moisture will cause problems again within months.

Check the subfloor thoroughly with a moisture meter. Wood subfloors should read below 12% moisture content, concrete below 4% with a pin meter. If readings are higher, run dehumidifiers and fans until levels drop — this can take 1-2 weeks in NB's humid conditions. Installing new laminate over a damp subfloor guarantees future problems.

Replace the underlayment in the affected area. Water-damaged foam or cork underlayment compresses and loses its moisture barrier properties. Use a premium underlayment with vapour barrier — this is especially important in NB where humidity drives moisture up through subfloors year-round.

When Professional Help Makes Sense

Consider hiring a flooring professional if water damage extends beyond 4-5 planks, if you discover subfloor damage that needs repair, or if the affected area is in a complex layout with multiple transitions. Professional installers can often source matching planks from discontinued product lines and have the tools to make repairs look seamless.

For extensive water damage covering more than 20-30% of the floor, full replacement often costs only 25-40% more than partial repair while giving you a fresh start with better moisture protection — worth considering given NB's challenging humidity conditions.

Prevention for Next Time

Install transition strips with moisture barriers at bathroom and kitchen entrances. Use kitchen mats near sinks and ensure bathroom exhaust fans run during and 30 minutes after showers. In NB's climate, preventing moisture problems is always easier and cheaper than fixing them after they occur.

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Can I install laminate flooring on stairs in my Edmundston home and what stair nosing options are available?

Yes, you can install laminate flooring on stairs in your Edmundston home, but it requires careful planning and the right accessories to ensure safety and durability. Laminate on stairs looks beautiful and creates a cohesive flow from your main floor, but the installation is significantly more complex than flat flooring.

Laminate Stair Installation Considerations

Installing laminate on stairs involves cutting precise angles, creating secure transitions, and ensuring each step is properly supported. Unlike floating floor installation on flat surfaces, stair laminate must be glued and mechanically fastened to prevent movement and squeaking. The click-lock system that makes laminate DIY-friendly on floors doesn't work on the vertical and angled surfaces of stairs.

In Edmundston's climate, pay special attention to expansion gaps around the perimeter of each step. Northern New Brunswick experiences some of the province's most extreme winter drying, which can cause laminate to contract more than in southern regions. Leave 3-4mm gaps where the laminate meets walls and stringers, and use colour-matched caulk or quarter-round moulding to hide these gaps while allowing movement.

Stair Nosing Options for Laminate

Coordinating laminate nosing is the most popular choice — manufactured by your flooring brand to match the colour and texture exactly. These typically cost \$15-\$35 per step and create a seamless appearance. Most quality laminate manufacturers (Pergo, Quick-Step, Mohawk) offer coordinating nosing for their popular collections.

Universal wood nosing in oak, maple, or pine runs \$12-\$25 per step and can be stained to complement your laminate. This gives you more flexibility if your specific laminate doesn't have matching nosing available, which is common with budget-grade products.

Metal nosing in aluminum or brass (\$20-\$40 per step) provides the most durable edge protection and works well in high-traffic homes. The metal creates a clean, modern transition and won't chip or dent like wood-based options.

Retrofit nosing is designed to cap over existing stair edges when installing laminate over carpet or hardwood. These cost \$18-\$30 per step and eliminate the need to remove existing stair covering, though they do raise the step height slightly.

Installation Complexity and Safety

Stair installation requires precise measuring, complex cuts around balusters, and proper fastening techniques. Each step must be individually templated, and mistakes are highly visible and expensive to correct. The nosing

must overhang the riser by exactly 3/4 to 1 inch for safe foot placement, and all steps must be identical in height and depth for building code compliance.

When to Hire a Professional

While experienced DIYers can handle flat laminate installation, stairs require professional installation. A flooring contractor has the specialized tools (stair jigs, pneumatic nailers, precision measuring devices) and experience to ensure safe, code-compliant results. Professional stair installation typically adds \$40-\$80 per step to your project cost, but the investment prevents safety hazards and costly mistakes. For a typical 13-step staircase in Edmundston, budget \$2,000-\$3,500 total including materials and professional installation.

Need help finding a professional flooring installer experienced with stair work? New Brunswick Flooring can match you with local contractors who specialize in laminate stair installations.

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Is there a laminate flooring option that is truly safe for NB homes concerned about formaldehyde off-gassing?

Yes, there are several laminate flooring options with minimal or zero formaldehyde emissions that are safe for health-conscious NB homeowners. Look for products certified to strict emission standards like GREENGUARD Gold, FloorScore, or CARB Phase 2 compliance.

The concern about formaldehyde in laminate flooring is legitimate — traditional laminate uses high-density fiberboard (HDF) cores bonded with urea-formaldehyde resins that can off-gas for months or years after installation. In NB's tightly sealed homes during our long heating season (October through April), these emissions can accumulate to concerning levels, especially problematic for children, elderly residents, or anyone with respiratory sensitivities.

Low-emission laminate options include brands like Pergo Outlast+ (GREENGUARD Gold certified), Mohawk RevWood Plus, and Shaw Repel. These products use either no-added-formaldehyde (NAF) or ultra-low-emitting-formaldehyde (ULEF) adhesives in their core construction. Expect to pay \$3-\$6 per square foot for these premium laminates versus \$2-\$4 for standard products, but the health benefits justify the modest price increase.

Even better alternatives for formaldehyde-sensitive households are luxury vinyl plank (LVP) products with stone plastic composite (SPC) or wood plastic composite (WPC) cores. These contain no wood fibers and therefore no formaldehyde-based adhesives. Quality SPC products like COREtec, Mannington Adura Max, or Shaw Floorte Pro are completely formaldehyde-free while offering superior moisture resistance for NB's humidity challenges. At \$4-\$7 per square foot, they're competitively priced with premium laminate.

Installation timing matters in NB. Even low-emission products benefit from off-gassing before occupancy. Plan your installation for late summer or early fall, then ventilate the space well for 2-3 days before moving furniture back. Our Maritime climate means you can open windows for natural ventilation during September and October — much harder to achieve during heating season when outdoor air is too cold for extended ventilation.

For the most sensitive individuals, consider **solid hardwood or engineered hardwood with low-VOC finishes.** While more expensive (\$6-\$14 per square foot installed), these natural products emit minimal chemicals once the factory finish has cured. Just remember that hardwood in NB requires humidity control — maintain 35-45% relative humidity during heating season to prevent gapping.

When hiring a professional installer, specify your formaldehyde concerns upfront. They can recommend specific products, ensure adequate ventilation during installation, and schedule the work to maximize off-gassing time before you occupy the space. Quality installers understand that indoor air quality is just as important as appearance

and durability in creating a healthy NB home.

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Q5

Is laminate flooring a good choice for New Brunswick homes with high humidity?

Laminate flooring can work well in New Brunswick homes, but only if you choose the right product and take precautions for our Maritime humidity swings. Standard laminate uses a high-density fibreboard (HDF) core that absorbs moisture, so you need to be strategic about product selection and environmental control to avoid problems.

The core issue with laminate in NB is our dramatic seasonal humidity cycle. From October through April, forced-air heating drops indoor humidity to 20-30% RH, causing the HDF core to dry and potentially shrink at the joints. Then from June through September, Maritime humidity can push indoor levels above 65%, causing the core to swell. This 30-50% annual swing is more extreme than what homeowners in inland provinces experience, and standard laminate is more vulnerable to these cycles than engineered hardwood or luxury vinyl plank.

That said, modern water-resistant and waterproof laminate products have improved dramatically. Look for laminate with **water-resistant HDF cores** or newer **waterproof rigid polymer cores** — these handle NB's humidity far better than traditional laminate from even five years ago. Products rated as water-resistant typically feature wax-impregnated HDF cores and sealed click-lock joints that resist surface moisture for 24-72 hours. True waterproof laminate uses a plastic composite core similar to LVP and handles moisture even better, though it costs more at \$4-\$6/sq ft for materials versus \$2-\$4/sq ft for standard laminate.

For NB homes specifically, laminate performs best in main-floor living areas, bedrooms, and hallways where you can control the indoor environment. It is not ideal for bathrooms, laundry rooms, or basements where standing water or persistent moisture is likely — even water-resistant laminate has limits. In those spaces, luxury vinyl plank (LVP) at \$3-\$7/sq ft is a safer investment.

To make laminate work in an NB home, you need to manage your indoor humidity year-round. Run a humidifier during heating season to keep RH above 35%, and use a dehumidifier or air conditioning in summer to keep it below 55%. Leave **8-12mm expansion gaps** around all walls and fixed objects — this is critical in NB where summer expansion is significant. Use a quality underlayment with an integrated vapour barrier, especially on main floors over crawl spaces where ground moisture migrates upward.

Laminate remains one of the most budget-friendly flooring options in NB at \$4-\$8/sq ft fully installed, making it attractive for homeowners who want a wood-look floor without hardwood pricing. A typical 800 sq ft installation runs \$3,200-\$6,400 total. Just be honest with yourself about whether you will maintain humidity control — if you will not run a humidifier in winter and a dehumidifier in summer, consider LVP instead, which handles NB's moisture swings without any environmental management.

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Q6

What is the best waterproof laminate flooring for NB kitchens and bathrooms?

For NB kitchens and bathrooms, true waterproof laminate with a rigid polymer or plastic composite core is the best option — but honestly, luxury vinyl plank (LVP) outperforms even waterproof laminate in wet areas and deserves serious consideration. If you are committed to laminate specifically, look for products marketed as "waterproof" rather than merely "water-resistant," as the distinction matters enormously in Maritime moisture

conditions.

Traditional laminate uses an HDF (high-density fibreboard) core that swells when exposed to moisture. Water-resistant laminate improves on this with wax-impregnated HDF and sealed joints, but the core is still wood-based and will eventually fail if moisture reaches it. **True waterproof laminate** replaces the HDF core entirely with a rigid plastic or polymer composite — similar to what you find in SPC (stone polymer composite) luxury vinyl plank. These products look and feel like laminate on the surface but handle water like vinyl underneath.

In NB kitchens, where spills, splashes from the sink, and dishwasher leaks are common, waterproof laminate handles day-to-day moisture well. However, NB kitchens in older homes (pre-1970s housing stock is common across the province) often have subfloor conditions that introduce moisture from below — especially in homes with crawl spaces or pier foundations where Maritime ground moisture migrates upward. If your subfloor shows moisture readings above 12% on a pin meter, address the moisture source before installing any laminate.

For bathrooms, even waterproof laminate has limitations. Bathrooms generate sustained humidity from showers and baths, and NB's already-high summer humidity compounds this. Water can pool around toilets, tubs, and vanities for extended periods. While waterproof laminate resists surface water, the joints remain vulnerable points where moisture can work its way underneath over time. Most flooring professionals in NB will recommend porcelain tile (\$9-\$20/sq ft fully installed) or quality LVP (\$5-\$12/sq ft fully installed) for bathrooms over any laminate product.

If you do choose waterproof laminate for a bathroom, ensure the subfloor is completely level (use self-levelling compound at \$2-\$4/sq ft if needed), apply silicone caulk around the perimeter instead of relying solely on expansion gaps, and seal all transitions to adjacent flooring with waterproof transition strips. These extra steps add \$1-\$2/sq ft but significantly improve long-term performance.

Waterproof laminate typically costs \$4-\$6/sq ft for materials in NB, plus \$2-\$4/sq ft for installation, putting a kitchen floor (150-250 sq ft) in the \$1,500-\$2,500 range fully installed. Compare this to quality SPC luxury vinyl plank at similar pricing but with genuinely superior waterproof performance. For kitchens, waterproof laminate is a reasonable choice. For bathrooms, tile or LVP is the smarter long-term investment in NB's Maritime climate.

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How long does laminate flooring last in a New Brunswick home?

Quality laminate flooring typically lasts 15-25 years in a New Brunswick home, though actual lifespan depends heavily on the product quality, installation conditions, and how well you manage NB's seasonal humidity swings. Budget laminate may show wear in as little as 7-10 years, while premium AC5-rated products in well-maintained environments can approach 30 years.

The single biggest factor affecting laminate lifespan in NB is **moisture management**. Our Maritime climate creates a 30-50% relative humidity swing between the dry heating season (20-30% RH from October to April) and the humid summer months (potentially above 65% RH from June to September). This annual cycle repeatedly stresses the HDF core and click-lock joints of laminate flooring. Over years of expansion and contraction, joints can loosen, edges can lift, and the surface layer can begin to separate from the core — especially in homes without humidity control.

NB homeowners who run a humidifier in winter (keeping RH above 35%) and a dehumidifier or AC in summer (keeping RH below 55%) will see significantly longer life from their laminate floors. Without humidity management, expect to lose 5-10 years from the product's rated lifespan, particularly in coastal communities like Saint John, Shediac, and Bathurst where ambient humidity runs higher year-round.

Product quality matters enormously. The AC (Abrasion Class) rating tells you about wear resistance: AC3 is rated for residential use, AC4 for heavy residential and light commercial, and AC5 for heavy commercial. For a busy NB household with kids, pets, and winter boot traffic, **AC4 is the minimum** — it resists scratches, dents, and wear far better than AC3. The wear layer thickness also varies: budget laminate may have a wear layer as thin as 6 mil, while premium products run 12-20 mil. That extra thickness directly translates to years of life.

The **underlayment and installation quality** also affect longevity. Proper underlayment with an integrated vapour barrier protects the HDF core from subfloor moisture — critical in NB homes, especially those with crawl spaces or concrete slabs. Correct expansion gaps (8-12mm around all perimeters) prevent buckling during summer humidity spikes. Poor installation that skimps on these details can cut a floor's life in half.

One important limitation: **laminate cannot be refinished.** Unlike hardwood, which can be sanded and refinished 3-5 times over a 50-100 year lifespan, laminate is a one-life product. Once the wear layer is gone or the surface is damaged beyond cosmetic repair, the entire floor must be replaced. At \$4-\$8/sq ft fully installed in NB, replacing a 1,000 sq ft laminate floor runs \$4,000-\$8,000 — a significant cost every 15-25 years compared to hardwood refinishing at \$3-\$6/sq ft.

For maximum laminate lifespan in NB, choose AC4 or AC5 rated products, install with quality vapour-barrier underlayment, maintain indoor humidity between 35-55% year-round, use entry mats to catch winter grit and salt, and clean with a damp (not wet) mop.

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Q8

Can I install laminate flooring in my NB basement without moisture problems?

You can install laminate flooring in an NB basement, but it requires careful moisture testing, the right product, and proper preparation — because New Brunswick basements are among the most moisture-challenging environments for flooring anywhere in Canada. Skipping any of these steps is gambling with your investment.

The fundamental challenge is that NB's water table sits close to the surface in many communities, and concrete basement slabs continuously release moisture vapour upward through the slab — a process called moisture vapour transmission. This happens year-round but intensifies during spring snowmelt (April through June) when the water table rises across the province. Coastal communities like Saint John and river valley locations like Fredericton and Miramichi experience this even more acutely.

Before installing any laminate in an NB basement, moisture testing is mandatory. Use a calcium chloride test (measures moisture vapour emission rate) or a relative humidity probe test on the concrete slab. Acceptable levels for laminate installation are generally below 3 lbs per 1,000 sq ft per 24 hours on the calcium chloride test or below 75% RH on the probe test. If your slab exceeds these thresholds, you need to address the moisture issue before any flooring goes down. Testing costs \$50-\$150 and takes 24-72 hours — a tiny investment compared to replacing a failed floor.

If moisture levels are acceptable, choose **water-resistant or waterproof laminate** with a wax-treated HDF core or, better yet, a rigid polymer core. Standard laminate with an untreated HDF core has no place in an NB basement. Expect to pay \$3-\$5/sq ft for water-resistant laminate materials or \$4-\$6/sq ft for true waterproof laminate.

Underlayment selection is critical. Use a vapour-barrier underlayment with a minimum 6-mil polyethylene moisture barrier — this is non-negotiable over concrete in NB. Foam underlayment with an integrated vapour barrier runs \$0.50-\$1.00/sq ft. For basements with borderline moisture readings, consider a **dimpled drainage membrane** (\$1.50-\$3.00/sq ft) beneath the underlayment, which creates an air gap between the concrete and flooring system for superior moisture management.

Never double up underlayment layers — if your laminate has a pre-attached pad, do not add a separate foam underlayment on top of the vapour barrier. The excessive cushion damages click-lock connections over time and voids most warranties.

Expansion gaps are even more critical in basements than on main floors. Leave a full 12mm gap around all walls, columns, pipes, and fixed objects. NB basement humidity can spike dramatically during spring and summer, and undersized gaps lead to buckling. Use quarter-round or shoe moulding to cover the gaps — never caulk or fill them.

A typical NB basement recreation room (400 sq ft) with water-resistant laminate, proper vapour-barrier underlayment, and professional installation runs **\$2,400-\$4,800 total**. That said, many NB flooring professionals will recommend luxury vinyl plank (LVP) over laminate for basements — LVP is 100% waterproof, dimensionally stable, and handles the moisture fluctuations of NB basements without any risk to the core material. LVP costs roughly the same or slightly more but eliminates the moisture anxiety entirely.

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What AC rating should I look for in laminate flooring for a busy NB household?

For a busy New Brunswick household with kids, pets, or heavy foot traffic, choose **AC4-rated laminate flooring at minimum** — it provides the wear resistance needed for active homes while standing up to NB's unique challenges like winter grit, salt tracking, and seasonal moisture changes. AC5 is even better if your budget allows, though the selection is smaller and costs more.

The AC (Abrasion Class) rating system measures a laminate floor's resistance to wear, impact, staining, and burning on a scale from AC1 to AC5. Here is what each rating means in practical terms for NB homeowners:

AC3 is rated for general residential use — bedrooms, guest rooms, and low-traffic spaces. It handles light foot traffic but wears noticeably in high-traffic areas within 5-10 years. In an NB home where winter boots track in sand, salt, and grit from November through April, AC3 wears faster than rated because those abrasive particles act like sandpaper on the wear layer every time someone walks across the floor.

AC4 is rated for heavy residential and light commercial use. This is the sweet spot for most NB families — it resists scratches from pet claws, withstands the abrasive grit tracked in during NB's long winter season, and handles the impact of dropped toys, heavy furniture, and daily kitchen activity. AC4 laminate typically costs \$3-\$5/sq ft for materials, about \$0.50-\$1.50 more per square foot than AC3 products.

AC5 is rated for heavy commercial use — retail stores, offices, and public spaces. For a home, AC5 is overkill in most rooms, but it makes sense for entryways, mudrooms, and main hallways in busy NB households. These areas take the worst punishment from winter footwear and abrasive debris. AC5 materials run \$4-\$6/sq ft.

Beyond the AC rating, pay attention to the **wear layer thickness**. Budget AC4 laminate may have a thinner wear layer than premium AC4 products, so two floors with the same AC rating can perform quite differently over time. Ask for the actual wear layer specification — 12 mil or thicker is ideal for high-traffic NB homes.

For NB specifically, the AC rating addresses surface wear but not moisture resistance. A high AC rating does not mean the laminate handles humidity well. You still need to choose products with water-resistant or waterproof cores for kitchens, entryways, and any room where NB's Maritime moisture could be an issue. Some manufacturers now combine AC4/AC5 ratings with waterproof rigid cores — these products offer the best of both worlds for NB conditions at \$4-\$6/sq ft.

A practical approach for a busy NB household: use **AC4 water-resistant laminate** throughout main living areas, **AC5 in the entryway and mudroom** where winter abuse is worst, and consider **AC3 only in low-traffic bedrooms** where you want to save on budget. At \$4-\$8/sq ft fully installed, the cost difference between AC3 and AC4 is modest — typically \$400-\$800 on a 1,000 sq ft project — but the durability difference over 15-20 years is

substantial.

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How do I install click-lock laminate flooring as a DIY project in my NB home?

Click-lock laminate is one of the most DIY-friendly flooring options available, and it is a great weekend project for NB homeowners comfortable with basic tools and careful measuring. The floating installation system requires no nails, glue, or specialized equipment — just patience, planning, and attention to NB-specific moisture considerations.

Step-by-Step Installation Guide

Start with acclimation and preparation. Bring the laminate into the room where it will be installed and let it sit, unopened, for 48-72 hours at normal room temperature (18-22°C). This is especially important in NB where laminate delivered from an unheated warehouse or cold delivery truck in winter can be significantly colder and drier than your home environment. Installing cold, dry laminate in a heated NB home leads to excessive expansion as the material warms and absorbs indoor moisture.

While the flooring acclimates, prepare your subfloor. Remove existing flooring if necessary (old flooring removal runs \$1-\$4/sq ft if you hire it out, but pulling up carpet or old laminate is manageable as DIY). Check the subfloor for flatness — it should be flat within 3mm over a 1.8-metre span. Sand down high spots on plywood subfloors and fill low spots with floor-levelling compound. Sweep and vacuum thoroughly — even small debris under laminate creates annoying bumps and clicking sounds underfoot.

Install the underlayment next. Over plywood subfloors in NB, use foam underlayment with an integrated vapour barrier (\$0.50-\$1.00/sq ft) — the vapour barrier protects against moisture from crawl spaces and ground-level subfloors common in NB homes. Over concrete, a vapour barrier is absolutely essential. Roll out the underlayment with edges butted together (not overlapped, unless the product specifies overlap), and tape the seams with the manufacturer's recommended tape. If your laminate has a pre-attached pad, skip the foam layer but still install a separate 6-mil poly vapour barrier over concrete.

Begin laying planks from the longest, straightest wall, working left to right. Place 10-12mm spacers along the wall to maintain the expansion gap — this gap is critical in NB, where summer humidity causes the floor to expand more than in drier provinces. Angle the long side of each plank into the previous row at about 20-30 degrees and press down to click into place. Stagger end joints by at least 30cm (12 inches) between rows for stability and a natural appearance.

Use a pull bar and tapping block (not a hammer directly on the laminate) to close tight joints. Cut planks with a mitre saw, circular saw, or even a sharp utility knife and straight edge for simple crosscuts. Measure and cut around door frames — undercutting the door casing with an oscillating multi-tool or hand saw creates a cleaner finish than

trying to notch the laminate.

Finish with transitions and trim. Install T-mouldings or reducer strips at doorways and transitions to other flooring types (\$15-\$50 each). Remove spacers and install quarter-round or shoe moulding around the perimeter to cover expansion gaps. Trim door bottoms if the new floor height causes clearance issues — laminate adds 8-12mm of height to your floor.

A typical 200-300 sq ft room takes a handy homeowner one full day. Materials for a DIY laminate project in NB run roughly \$2-\$5/sq ft for the laminate plus \$0.50-\$1.00/sq ft for underlayment, saving you the \$2-\$4/sq ft installation labour cost. For a 300 sq ft room, that is \$600-\$1,200 in labour savings. Bring your room dimensions to a local NB retailer and buy 10% extra for cuts and waste.

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Q11

What underlayment is best under laminate flooring in a New Brunswick home?

The best underlayment for laminate flooring in a New Brunswick home is a quality foam underlayment with an integrated vapour barrier — the vapour barrier component is essential in NB's Maritime climate where moisture from below the subfloor is a constant concern. The specific type depends on whether you are installing over plywood, concrete, or an existing floor.

Over plywood subfloors (the most common scenario in NB homes), use a standard foam underlayment with a built-in polyethylene vapour barrier. Products like basic poly-foam with a moisture barrier run \$0.50-\$0.75/sq ft and provide adequate cushion, sound dampening, and moisture protection. This is the minimum standard for any NB installation. Many NB homes, especially older properties with crawl spaces or pier foundations, have ground

moisture that migrates upward through the subfloor assembly — the vapour barrier blocks this moisture from reaching the laminate's HDF core.

For a **premium upgrade**, consider **cork underlayment** at \$1.00-\$2.00/sq ft. Cork provides superior sound dampening (reduces hollow sound that laminate can produce over hard subfloors), adds thermal insulation that keeps floors warmer during NB's long heating season, and has natural moisture resistance. If you choose cork, add a separate 6-mil polyethylene vapour barrier beneath it for full moisture protection. Cork is particularly worthwhile in second-floor installations where sound transmission to rooms below matters.

Over concrete basement slabs, moisture protection becomes the top priority. NB basement concrete continuously releases moisture vapour, especially during spring snowmelt from April through June when the water table rises across the province. At minimum, use a foam underlayment with a heavy-duty vapour barrier (6-mil poly minimum). For basements with elevated moisture readings, install a **dimpled drainage membrane** (\$1.50-\$3.00/sq ft) directly on the concrete before any underlayment — this creates an air gap that allows moisture to dissipate without reaching the flooring system.

One critical mistake NB homeowners make: doubling up underlayment. If your laminate planks have a pre-attached foam pad on the underside (common with many mid-range and premium products), do **not** add a separate foam underlayment on top. The double cushion layer creates too much give, which damages click-lock connections over time and causes joints to separate — a problem compounded by NB's humidity-driven expansion and contraction cycles. With pre-attached pad laminate, install only a standalone vapour barrier sheet (6-mil poly, \$0.15-\$0.25/sq ft) if moisture protection is needed.

Additional tips for NB installations: overlap vapour barrier seams by 20cm (8 inches) and tape them with moisture-barrier tape — gaps in the vapour barrier defeat its purpose. Run the underlayment up the wall by 2-3cm behind the baseboard for added protection at the perimeter, where moisture intrusion is most likely. And never use carpet pad, old newspaper, or improvised materials as underlayment — they provide no moisture protection and void your laminate warranty.

For a typical NB installation, budget **\$0.50-\$1.00/sq ft for standard foam-with-vapour-barrier underlayment**, or \$1.00-\$2.00/sq ft for cork with a separate vapour barrier. On a 500 sq ft project, that is \$250-\$1,000 — a small cost that directly protects your \$2,000-\$4,000 laminate investment from NB's ever-present moisture challenges.

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Q12

Can laminate flooring handle NB's seasonal humidity swings without buckling?

Laminate flooring can handle New Brunswick's seasonal humidity swings without buckling, but only with proper expansion gaps, quality underlayment, and active indoor humidity management. Without these three elements, buckling is not just possible — it is likely, especially during the transition from dry winter to humid summer.

NB experiences one of the most dramatic indoor humidity cycles in Canada. From October through April, forced-air heating drops indoor relative humidity to 20-30%, causing the laminate's HDF core to dry and contract slightly. Then from June through September, Maritime humidity can push indoor levels above 65% without air conditioning, causing the core to absorb moisture and expand. This annual swing of 30-50% RH is significantly more severe than what homeowners in Ontario, Alberta, or the Prairies experience, and it is the primary reason laminate floors buckle in NB homes.

Buckling occurs when expanding laminate has nowhere to go. The floor pushes against walls, cabinets, door frames, or island bases, and with no room to expand, the planks lift upward at the joints — sometimes dramatically. This almost always happens during the first hot, humid summer after installation.

The **most important preventive measure is proper expansion gaps.** Every floating laminate floor needs 10-12mm of gap around all walls, pipes, door frames, cabinets, islands, and any fixed object. In NB, err on the generous side — use 12mm spacers during installation. Never pin the floor by driving fasteners through it, placing heavy furniture legs directly on it without felt pads, or installing mouldings that are nailed through the laminate into the subfloor. Quarter-round and shoe moulding should be nailed to the wall, not the floor, so the floor can move freely underneath.

Additional precautions include **transition strips at every doorway** between rooms. A continuous laminate floor spanning a large open-concept NB home without transitions acts like one massive panel — when it expands in summer, the cumulative movement can exceed the perimeter gaps. Most manufacturers recommend transition strips every 8-10 metres (25-30 feet) in any direction. In NB's humidity conditions, following these maximum run

lengths is essential.

Active humidity management is the third critical factor. Run a dehumidifier or air conditioning during summer to keep indoor humidity below 55% RH. During heating season, use a humidifier to keep humidity above 35% RH — this prevents excessive winter contraction that opens visible gaps at joints, which then close unevenly when summer humidity returns. A hygrometer (digital humidity monitor, \$15-\$25 at any NB hardware store) lets you track conditions year-round.

Water-resistant laminate with wax-treated cores and sealed joints handles humidity swings better than standard laminate because the wax coating slows moisture absorption. These products cost \$0.50-\$1.50 more per square foot than standard laminate but provide a meaningful buffer against NB's humidity extremes.

If your laminate floor has already buckled, the fix depends on the cause. If expansion gaps were insufficient, you can pull up the baseboard, trim the laminate edges with an oscillating multi-tool, and reinstall the moulding — a repair most handy NB homeowners can handle. If the HDF core has swollen from actual water damage (a leak, flood, or persistent moisture from below), the affected planks must be replaced. Catching humidity issues early, before permanent core swelling, is the key to avoiding costly repairs.

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What are the best laminate flooring brands sold at NB retailers like Kent and Home Depot?

NB retailers carry several quality laminate brands that perform well in Maritime conditions, but the key is choosing the right product specifications rather than focusing solely on the brand name. What matters most for NB homes is the AC rating, core moisture resistance, and wear layer thickness — and you can find good and poor options within any brand.

At **Kent Building Supplies** — NB's largest locally-owned home improvement retailer with locations across the province — you will find a solid selection of laminate products suited to local conditions. Kent staff in the flooring department typically understand NB's moisture challenges and can steer you toward products with water-resistant cores. Kent also offers installation services through their contractor network, which is convenient for homeowners who want a single point of contact for materials and installation.

At **Home Depot** locations in Moncton, Saint John, and Fredericton, popular laminate lines include products across various price points. Home Depot carries multiple house brands and national brands, ranging from budget AC3 options at \$1.50-\$2.50/sq ft to premium water-resistant AC4/AC5 products at \$3.50-\$5.50/sq ft. Their flooring department can order specialty products not carried in-store, which expands your options significantly.

Rather than chasing a specific brand, focus on these specifications when shopping at any NB retailer:

AC rating: AC4 minimum for main living areas in a busy NB household. AC3 is acceptable only for low-traffic bedrooms. Look for AC5 if you want maximum durability in entryways and hallways that take the brunt of NB's winter grit and salt.

Core type: For NB installations, prioritize water-resistant HDF cores (wax-impregnated) or waterproof rigid polymer cores. Standard HDF without water treatment is risky in NB's humidity environment, especially on main floors over crawl spaces or in kitchens and mudrooms.

Wear layer thickness: 12 mil or thicker for high-traffic areas. Thicker wear layers resist scratching and scuffing from the abrasive sand and salt tracked into NB homes for six months of the year.

Warranty: Look for 25-year or lifetime residential warranties, but read the fine print — many warranties exclude moisture damage or require proof that indoor humidity was maintained within a specific range. This is relevant in NB where humidity control requires active management.

Pricing at NB retailers generally runs \$2-\$5/sq ft for materials, with installation available through store-affiliated contractors at an additional \$2-\$4/sq ft. Budget \$4-\$8/sq ft fully installed for a quality product with proper underlayment. Always ask about current promotions — both Kent and Home Depot run seasonal flooring sales that

can save 15-25% on materials.

Bring your room measurements to the store and buy 10% extra for cuts and waste. Take samples home and live with them for a few days — colours look different under your home's lighting than under retail fluorescents. And regardless of which brand you choose, pair it with a quality vapour-barrier underlayment suited to NB's moisture conditions.

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Q14

How do I repair a damaged laminate plank in my New Brunswick home?

Repairing a damaged laminate plank depends on the type and severity of the damage — minor surface scratches and chips can be fixed with repair kits, while a severely damaged plank needs to be replaced entirely by disassembling the floor back to the damaged piece. The good news is that both approaches are manageable DIY projects for most NB homeowners.

For minor surface scratches, use a laminate floor repair marker or crayon that matches your floor colour. These are available at Kent, Home Depot, and most NB hardware stores for \$5-\$15. Clean the scratch with a damp cloth, apply the marker or crayon following the wood grain direction, and wipe away excess with a soft cloth. For slightly deeper scratches that catch your fingernail, use a laminate repair paste or putty kit (\$10-\$20) — apply the coloured putty into the scratch, smooth it level with a plastic scraper, and let it cure for 24 hours before walking on it.

For chips and dents, laminate repair kits with coloured wax sticks work well. Heat the wax stick with the included melting tool (or a low-heat soldering iron), drip the melted wax into the damaged area, and smooth it flush with the surrounding surface using a plastic levelling card before the wax sets. These kits run \$15-\$30 and include multiple

colour sticks so you can blend to match your specific floor shade.

For severely damaged planks — deep gouges, water-swollen edges, cracked surfaces, or planks that have buckled — the entire plank needs to be replaced. With click-lock laminate (the standard in NB installations from the past 15+ years), this means disassembling the floor from the nearest wall back to the damaged plank. Remove the baseboard or quarter-round moulding along the closest wall, then unclick each row of planks, numbering or marking them so they go back in the correct order. Replace the damaged plank with a matching spare (this is why keeping leftover planks from your original installation is so important), then reassemble the rows and reinstall the moulding.

If the damaged plank is in the **centre of a large room far from any wall**, disassembly back to that point may be impractical. In this case, you can use the "cut-and-replace" method: use a circular saw set to the exact depth of the laminate to cut a rectangle inside the damaged plank (staying 2-3cm from all edges), remove the centre piece, then carefully chisel out the remaining edges. Trim the tongue and groove from the replacement plank's edges, apply a thin bead of wood glue to the joints, drop the new plank into position, and weight it flat while the glue dries. This method is trickier and the repair is not as seamless as a full disassembly, but it works when the alternative is pulling up 30 rows of flooring.

NB-specific consideration: if the plank damage was caused by moisture — swollen edges, warped surface, or white discolouration at the joints — fix the moisture source before replacing the plank. Check for leaks, measure subfloor moisture with a pin meter, and verify that your indoor humidity is in the 35-55% RH range. Replacing a moisture-damaged plank without addressing the cause means the new plank will eventually suffer the same fate, especially during NB's humid summer months.

Keep spare planks stored flat in a climate-controlled area of your NB home. Planks stored in an unheated garage or shed experience the full range of NB's temperature and humidity extremes, which can pre-damage them before you ever need them for a repair.

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Is laminate flooring safe for homes with pets and children in NB?

Yes, quality laminate flooring is a safe and practical choice for New Brunswick families with pets and children, provided you choose a product with the right ratings and understand the limitations. Modern laminate has come a long way from the thin, slippery products of the 1990s, and today's AC4 or AC5-rated options handle the demands of busy households remarkably well.

The key safety considerations for families start with **surface texture and slip resistance**. Look for laminate with an embossed-in-register (EIR) or textured surface rather than a high-gloss finish — textured surfaces provide better traction for toddlers learning to walk and dogs scrambling around corners. Many manufacturers now offer hand-scraped or wire-brushed textures that mimic real hardwood while providing meaningful grip. For homes with young children, also check that the product carries **FloorScore or GREENGUARD Gold certification**, which confirms that volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions meet strict indoor air quality standards. This matters because children spend more time on the floor and are more sensitive to off-gassing than adults.

For pet owners specifically, laminate's hard melamine surface resists scratches better than most hardwood species, though it is not scratch-proof. Large dogs with untrimmed nails will eventually leave marks on any laminate — keeping nails trimmed is your best defence. The bigger concern with pets is **moisture from water bowls and accidents**. Standard HDF-core laminate absorbs water through seams and edges, causing permanent swelling. In a home with pets or young children, invest in a **water-resistant or waterproof laminate** with a wax-sealed or treated core. These products cost \$3 to \$5 per square foot for materials in New Brunswick, compared to \$2 to \$4 for standard laminate, but the extra dollar or two per square foot saves you from replacing swollen planks.

In New Brunswick's climate, laminate performs well in family homes on main floors and upper levels where humidity can be controlled. The Maritime humidity swings between winter drying (indoor humidity dropping to 20-30% with forced-air heating) and summer expansion (humidity climbing above 60%) mean your expansion gaps need to be on the generous side — at least 10 to 12mm around all walls and fixed objects. This prevents buckling during humid summers when the whole family is tracking in moisture from outside. A quality foam underlayment with an integrated vapour barrier adds comfort underfoot for kids playing on the floor and protects the HDF core from any subfloor moisture.

A few practical tips for NB families: place mats under pet water bowls and at all exterior doors to catch snowmelt and mud during the long winter season. Clean up spills immediately — even water-resistant laminate is not designed for standing water. Use felt pads under all furniture legs, and consider area rugs in high-traffic play zones to reduce wear and provide a softer surface for young children. A typical 800-square-foot main floor laminate installation in New Brunswick runs **\$3,200 to \$6,400 fully installed**, making it one of the most budget-friendly

options for families who need durability without the cost of hardwood.

For a straightforward rectangular room, click-lock laminate is one of the most DIY-friendly flooring options available. However, if you are covering a large open-concept main floor or dealing with older NB housing stock with uneven subfloors, a professional installer ensures proper subfloor preparation, correct expansion gaps, and clean transitions between rooms — all details that matter for longevity in a high-traffic family home.

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How much expansion gap do I need for laminate flooring in a New Brunswick home?

You need a minimum of 10 to 12mm (approximately 3/8 to 1/2 inch) expansion gap around all walls, pipes, cabinets, doorframes, and fixed objects when installing laminate flooring in a New Brunswick home. This is not optional — it is the single most important detail that separates a laminate floor that performs for 15 years from one that buckles within its first summer.

Laminate flooring is a floating floor system, meaning it is not attached to the subfloor beneath it. The entire floor assembly sits on top of a foam underlayment and moves as a unit in response to temperature and humidity changes. When humidity rises, the HDF (high-density fibreboard) core absorbs moisture from the air and expands in all directions. When humidity drops, the core releases moisture and contracts. The expansion gap provides the space this movement requires. Without adequate gaps, the expanding floor has nowhere to go, and the pressure builds until planks push upward — creating visible humps, buckled seams, and popped click-lock joints.

New Brunswick's Maritime climate makes expansion gaps more critical here than in most Canadian provinces. The annual indoor humidity swing in NB homes commonly ranges from 20-30% relative humidity during winter heating season up to 60-70% during humid Maritime summers — a swing of 30 to 50 percentage points. This is significantly more severe than homes in Alberta, Saskatchewan, or Manitoba, where the air is drier year-round. That dramatic swing means your laminate floor will experience more expansion and contraction through the year than the same product installed in Calgary or Winnipeg. Many manufacturers specify 8mm as a minimum gap, but experienced NB installers routinely use **10 to 12mm to account for the province's moisture extremes**, and this is the standard I recommend for any installation here.

The expansion gap must be maintained at **every fixed point**, not just along walls. This includes around kitchen islands, bathroom vanities, stair nosings, doorframes, heating pipes, and columns. Transition strips at doorways between rooms serve a dual purpose — they cover the visual break and allow each section of floor to expand independently. In an open-concept NB home, any single run of laminate longer than 8 to 10 metres (roughly 25 to 30 feet) should have a transition strip to break the floor into sections that can move without fighting each other.

A common mistake is pinching the expansion gap by pushing baseboards, quarter-round, or shoe moulding too tightly against the floor surface. These trim pieces should rest against the wall, not press down on the laminate. Similarly, never screw or nail transition strips through the floating floor — attach them to the subfloor only. Heavy furniture and appliances placed on top of a floating floor can also restrict movement, particularly refrigerators and kitchen islands. Use furniture sliders or felt pads and ensure appliances are not pinning the floor in place.

For NB homes specifically, pay extra attention to rooms with southern or western sun exposure, where direct sunlight can heat the floor surface significantly and cause localized expansion beyond what humidity alone would produce. If your home has large windows facing the harbour in Saint John or overlooking the Saint John River in Fredericton, consider using UV-filtering window treatments to moderate surface temperature swings on your laminate floor.

During installation, use spacers along all walls to maintain consistent gaps, and remove them only after the entire floor is complete. The gaps are hidden by baseboards or quarter-round trim, so they are invisible in the finished room. If you are tackling this as a DIY project, spacers are inexpensive and available at any NB building supply store. For larger or more complex layouts — especially open-concept main floors common in newer NB construction — a professional installer ensures every gap, transition, and detail is handled correctly.

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Q17

Can I put laminate flooring over existing vinyl in my NB home?

Yes, you can install laminate flooring over existing vinyl in most cases, but several conditions must be met for a successful result in a New Brunswick home. The vinyl must be flat, firmly bonded to the subfloor, in good condition, and only a single layer. If those conditions are met, you can save the time and cost of removal — but if the vinyl is failing, loose, or layered, it needs to come out first.

The first and most important check is **flatness**. Laminate flooring requires a subfloor that is flat to within 3mm over a 1-metre span (roughly 1/8 inch over 3 feet). Vinyl sheet flooring and vinyl tiles that are well-adhered and smooth provide an acceptable surface. However, if the vinyl has bubbles, curling edges, lifted seams, or areas where the adhesive has failed, those imperfections will telegraph through the laminate and cause problems with the click-lock

joints. Walk the entire floor in socks — you will feel every bump, depression, and lifted edge. Any defect you can feel will show through.

Before you proceed, you must consider the age of the vinyl. This is especially critical in New Brunswick, where many homes were built or renovated between the 1950s and 1980s. Vinyl flooring and the black adhesive (cutback adhesive) used before 1986 commonly contain asbestos. **Never sand, scrape, or aggressively remove old vinyl without testing first.** An asbestos test costs just \$25 to \$50 per sample in NB and gives you peace of mind. If the vinyl tests positive for asbestos, you have two safe options: install directly over it (encapsulating it in place) or hire a licensed abatement professional for removal. Encapsulating by installing laminate over asbestos-containing vinyl is considered safe and is actually the preferred approach in many cases, as it avoids disturbing the fibres entirely.

If the vinyl passes inspection, **install a quality foam underlayment with an integrated vapour barrier between the vinyl and the laminate.** This is essential in NB for two reasons. First, it provides cushion and sound dampening. Second, the vapour barrier protects the laminate's HDF core from moisture migrating through the vinyl from the subfloor below — a real concern in New Brunswick's Maritime climate, particularly on ground-level floors and in coastal communities like Saint John, Shediac, and Bathurst where ambient humidity is persistently elevated. Budget \$0.50 to \$1.00 per square foot for underlayment.

There are situations where you should **not** install over existing vinyl. If there are multiple layers of flooring already in place (vinyl over vinyl, or vinyl over old linoleum), the combined thickness creates too much cushion and instability for a floating laminate floor. If the vinyl is on a concrete slab — common in NB basements — you must perform a moisture test on the concrete before proceeding. Maritime moisture migrates continuously through NB basement slabs, and trapping moisture between the concrete, vinyl, and laminate creates conditions for mould and HDF core swelling. Use a calcium chloride test or relative humidity probe to confirm the slab moisture level is within acceptable limits.

For a standard NB home with a single layer of well-adhered vinyl on a plywood subfloor, installing laminate over the vinyl is a practical, cost-effective approach. You save \$1 to \$3 per square foot in removal and disposal costs. A typical 800-square-foot installation over existing vinyl runs **\$3,200 to \$6,400 fully installed** in New Brunswick. This is a reasonable DIY project for a single room with a straightforward layout, though larger installations benefit from a professional's eye for subfloor assessment and proper expansion gap planning.

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Q18

What is the difference between laminate and luxury vinyl plank for NB homes?

The fundamental difference between laminate and luxury vinyl plank (LVP) is their core material and how they handle moisture — and in New Brunswick's Maritime climate, this distinction matters more than in most provinces. Laminate has an HDF (high-density fibreboard) core made from wood fibres, which means it absorbs water and swells when exposed to moisture. LVP has a plastic-based core (either SPC or WPC), making it 100% waterproof. For NB homeowners dealing with spring snowmelt, humid summers, and basement moisture, this is often the deciding factor.

Laminate flooring uses a photographic image layer protected by a melamine wear layer bonded to that HDF core. Quality AC4 or AC5-rated laminate runs **\$2 to \$5 per square foot for materials** in New Brunswick, with installation adding \$2 to \$4 per square foot for a fully installed cost of **\$4 to \$8 per square foot**. Laminate excels at replicating the look and underfoot feel of real hardwood — the rigid HDF core gives it a solid, natural sound when walked on, and the best modern laminates are nearly indistinguishable from wood visually. It holds up well in bedrooms, living rooms, and hallways where moisture exposure is minimal and humidity is controlled.

Laminate's weakness in NB is moisture vulnerability. Water that reaches the HDF core through seams, edges, or the underside causes permanent swelling — the damage cannot be reversed. Standard laminate is not suitable for NB bathrooms, laundry rooms, basements, or entryways where snowmelt gets tracked in during the long winter. Water-resistant laminate products with wax-treated cores offer some protection against brief spills but are still not truly waterproof.

Luxury vinyl plank uses a solid plastic core topped with a photographic print layer and a urethane wear layer. Quality LVP costs **\$3 to \$7 per square foot for materials** in NB (premium brands like COREtec, Mannington Adura, and Shaw Floorte run \$5 to \$8), with installation adding \$2 to \$5 per square foot for a fully installed cost of **\$5 to \$12 per square foot**. LVP is completely waterproof — you can submerge it and it will not swell, warp, or degrade. This makes it suitable for every room in a New Brunswick home, including basements, bathrooms, kitchens, and entryways.

LVP also handles NB's dramatic humidity swings better than laminate. While both products expand and contract with temperature and humidity changes, LVP's plastic core has less dimensional movement than laminate's wood-fibre core. This means fewer issues with gapping in dry NB winters and less risk of buckling during humid Maritime summers, though proper expansion gaps (10-12mm) are still required for both products.

The trade-offs to consider include **feel and sound**. Laminate generally feels more solid and sounds more like real wood underfoot, while thinner LVP can feel slightly hollow or plasticky, particularly cheaper products. Adding a quality cork underlayment (\$1 to \$2 per square foot) under LVP improves both warmth and sound. **Durability** also differs — laminate's melamine surface resists scratches better than most LVP wear layers, but LVP's flexibility makes it more dent-resistant when heavy objects are dropped. For homes with large dogs, LVP's softer surface may show scratch patterns more readily than a high-AC-rated laminate.

For New Brunswick homes specifically, LVP is the safer all-around choice because of the province's moisture challenges. If you are flooring a basement, bathroom, kitchen, or entryway, LVP is the clear winner. For upper-floor bedrooms and living spaces where moisture is not a concern and you want the most wood-like feel at the lowest cost, quality laminate remains an excellent option. Many NB homeowners use a combination — LVP on the main floor and in wet areas, laminate in upstairs bedrooms — to balance performance and budget. Both products install as floating click-lock systems, making them among the most DIY-friendly options available.

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Does laminate flooring need to acclimate before installation in New Brunswick?

Yes, laminate flooring must acclimate before installation in New Brunswick, and skipping this step is one of the most common causes of post-installation problems in Maritime homes. Most manufacturers require 48 to 72 hours of acclimation, but in NB's climate — with its extreme seasonal humidity swings — experienced installers often recommend **a full 5 to 7 days** to be safe, particularly during winter and early spring when conditions inside your home differ dramatically from the warehouse or delivery truck.

Acclimation allows the laminate planks to reach moisture equilibrium with the indoor environment where they will be installed. Laminate's HDF core is made from compressed wood fibres, and like all wood-based products, it absorbs and releases moisture from the surrounding air. If planks are installed while their moisture content is significantly different from your home's ambient conditions, the floor will expand or contract after installation as it adjusts — leading to gaps between planks, buckling, or popped click-lock joints.

New Brunswick's climate makes acclimation more critical than in most provinces. Here is why: in winter, NB homes with forced-air heating typically have indoor humidity levels of 20 to 30% — well below the 35 to 55% range that wood-based products prefer. Laminate stored in an unheated warehouse or delivered on a cold truck may arrive with moisture content suited to 40-50% humidity. Installing it immediately in your dry, heated home means the planks will lose moisture and shrink over the following weeks, opening gaps at every seam. Conversely, laminate delivered during a humid Maritime summer may carry excess moisture that causes swelling if installed before equilibrium.

The proper acclimation process is straightforward but must be followed correctly. **Open all boxes and lay the planks flat** in the room where they will be installed, or in adjacent rooms with the same climate conditions. Do not leave planks stacked in unopened boxes — the interior planks cannot exchange moisture with the air. The room must be at normal living conditions: **temperature between 18 and 24 degrees Celsius and humidity between 35 and 55%**. If you are acclimating during an NB winter, run your heating system at its normal setting and use a humidifier to bring humidity up to at least 35%. If acclimating during a humid summer, run your air conditioning or dehumidifier to keep humidity below 55%. Acclimating in an unheated or non-climate-controlled space defeats the entire purpose.

A few practical tips for NB homeowners: **use a hygrometer** (available for \$15 to \$30 at any NB hardware store) to monitor the room's relative humidity during the acclimation period. If humidity readings are stable and within the 35 to 55% range for 48 hours, and your planks have been in the room for the manufacturer's recommended time, you are ready to install. If your home does not have humidity control (no humidifier in winter, no AC or dehumidifier in summer), address that first — acclimating flooring in an environment you cannot maintain year-round simply means

you are acclimating to temporary conditions.

Also consider the timing of your project. The ideal installation window in New Brunswick is **late summer through fall (August to October)**, when indoor humidity naturally sits in the comfortable middle range and you are not fighting the extremes of winter drying or spring snowmelt moisture. If you must install during winter, budget extra time for acclimation and commit to running a humidifier through the entire heating season to protect your investment.

This is a step you can manage yourself if doing a DIY laminate installation, but a professional installer will factor acclimation into the project timeline and verify moisture conditions before starting work — an important safeguard for larger or more expensive installations.

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