



by Perry Wright

Pre-finished With Attitude: Tools for the Wood Flooring Installer

If you're like me and have been at this game for what seems like eons, I bet you wonder how we did all those things we take for granted, doing them today. Not so long ago, wood flooring was installed with a hand saw, hammer and nails. It was a simple time, and things happened much slower than today's fast-paced society.

With this mentality, the wood flooring industry and its manufacturing mills have come up with a way to make a once long process, happen practically overnight: the pre-finished wood floor.

With pre-finished wood flooring, special care must be taken to care for and protect the finish from being damaged

during the installation. After the pre-finished wood flooring is installed, no one is going to be sanding or filling little mishaps, which can happen if you're not careful, or do not have the right tools.

One tool that bridges that hurdle, is the LAM-HAMMER. It is used to tap and close the gaps on either the ends or the lengths of the boards being installed. It will do everything a tapping block or slap bar will do, and do it better, without damaging the pre-finished wood flooring. It also works great for unfinished and laminate floors. It's especially helpful with that last board in the row, or that final last row of boards next to the wall.

The LAM-HAMMER is a unique

tool, 18 inches in length, that works on the principle much like a slide hammer type, dent remover, automotive body tool. The weight is allowed to slide on the rod, which makes up most of the body of the tool. There are stops on both ends of the rod, so the weight will not come off. The stops are also the parts of the tool that do its work, when the sliding weight is quickly and bluntly forced against the stop, creating motion of the entire tool. The notched end of the tool is where it grips the board to be moved into place. A circular, non-marring plastic rest is all that touches the prefinished wood flooring.

Cut your board allowing for the man-



Lam-Hammer with the extension attached, to get under a cabinet toe kick.



Showing how the tool doesn't fit under the toe kick without the extension.



No more prying and scarring the toe kick with a small prybar.

About the Author

Perry Wright has been installing various floor coverings for 32 years, starting at age 12, helping family during summer breaks. He has owned his own professional installation company for 23 years, now called "Floorcoverings Done Wright", based in Austin, Texas. Perry is a student of wood science with Howard Brickman, an NWFPA Certified Wood Flooring Inspector, an ITSFC Certified Carpet Inspector, and a CFI Certified Expert Floorcovering Installer.

ufacturer's required expansion space. Slip the notched end between the wall and end of board, depending on the direction you want to move the board, and while holding the well built handle in one hand, move the slide hammer in the direction away from the wall to hit the tools stop with moderate force. The board simply slides into place, tightening any gaps.

Another unique addition to the LAM-HAMMER, complementing its use, is the extra tight space extension, which comes with the tool. It adds an additional 9" to the tool's length. This is great for getting under toe kicks, baseboard heating, radiators, or anything mounted low on the wall. In the past, multiple slap bars or homemade contraptions were used to get the length needed to get under them, without banging the overhanging obstacle with your hammer.

Marketed for floating flooring installations, I find the LAM-HAMMER most useful to me with all wood and laminate flooring installations, including nail or staple down and especially glue-down wood flooring. Its versatility is unmatched by any tool or combination of tools on the market for its use, especially with today's hurry up schedules and deadlines.

Another tool that has made me drool ever since it came out, is the HIGHPRO AS-4090 pneumatic staple gun for the thicker engineered wood flooring produced today. No longer is wood flooring just 3/4" or 5/16"-thick.

Along came engineered wood flooring, most of it being pre-finished. Thicknesses of 5/16", 1/4" and 3/8" were the norm, and 1-inch staples worked great. Not anymore! Manufacturers of solid and engineered wood flooring have been producing products in many different thicknesses greater than the old standard 3/8" thickness—we now have 7/16", 1/2", 9/16"—and not to forget bamboo, where the standard is 5/8", 11/16" all the way to 3/4". With the increase in the thickness of the boards being produced, the 1-inch staple, commonly used in the past had nowhere near the penetration into the substrate it needed to perform. Many floors failed, trying to make the 1-inch long staple work. If you tried to use your 15-gauge stapler, it made pimples on



These pictures demonstrate the Lam-Hammer in the field, using it to bring the board in tight.



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These three photos demonstrate the HIGHPRO tool in action with both a conventional and reverse grip. The reverse grip capability comes in handy for tight quarters.

the engineered flooring surface that could be seen. I tried and found out the hard way and I'm not getting paid to learn to swear words.

HIGHPRO Tools saw this concern and did something about it. A pneumatic staple gun, the AS-4090, is now capable of shooting 18-gauge 1-1/2" long staples, 1-1/4" long staples, and the old standard

1" long staples. Now capable of stapling 5/16"-thick wood flooring all the way up to 5/8"-thick flooring, while maintaining the perfect 45-degree angle on the staple for maximum holding power. The tool only weighs 4-1/2 pounds and is easy to maneuver when speed and production counts. The smaller 18-gauge staple will not pimple the pre-finished wear layer of

engineered wood flooring, as was common when trying to adapt the 15-gauge staple to the delicate pre-finished wood flooring. The non-marring foot base and its fast wing nut adjustability make it a breeze to adapt to any thickness of flooring (unfinished or pre-finished), between 5/16- and 5/8-inches.

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Here are the new 07 Proknees, which are ready to spring into action as soon as you take them out of the box. The company has made several improvements since its previous model.



Here are the 07 Proknees in action. They are available in various sizes, and can be customized according to your leg length and calf size.

top of your work, it is easily used holding the tool backwards in your hand, while being off of your work, in places that are tight quarters.

The tool is shipped ready to instantly install 7/16" through 5/8" thickness flooring. It comes with a spacer for the thinner 5/16" through 3/8"-thick wood flooring, along with all the Allen wrenches and a nice protective carrying case.

HIGHPRO has hit a home run with this versatile tool, which will make your job more enjoyable and worry free (as long as you wipe the drool off it quickly, like I did)!

We have many tools that we use in our everyday work. If we don't take care of those tools and they break or get worn, then we lose all productivity until that tool is repaired or replaced.

One tool we use daily that we can't afford to repair or replace, is our knees. For 2007, PROKNEES has come out with a totally new knee pad, which works off of their already proven design. The 07 ProKnees are full of beefed up amenities, including a choice of 5/8" or 1" inner pad thickness, and a molded-in anti-twist cuff that wraps 9" around the lower leg. They also have well-placed cutouts to make them more lightweight than the original version. The boot on the 07 model has a longer-lasting, thicker, non-marring, three-ply construction. The inner layer liners are moisture wicking and attached via Velcro. Just like the

originals, they can be totally rebuilt, if the need ever arises.

The PROKNEES are custom fit to the length and diameter of your legs, providing the ultimate comfort and fit. I have never owned another knee pad that

comes close in comparison to my original Proknees, until now.

Instead of the snap design of the original Proknees, a screw-in design has been implemented to take the worry of a snap coming undone between the boot and the finished flooring and the inevitable scratch that occurs as a result. It hasn't happened to me very often, but it did happen once. The pads are held to the frame with zip ties, making internal pad changes a snap.

The 07 model PROKNEES sent to me for testing also came with an extra set of frame boots and inner linings, along with a protective storage bag for keeping the Proknees safe until the next job.

Besides your hands and eyes, your knees are very important tools that are used daily. Protecting and caring for your tools is essential to being productive and making money in this industry, where down time from a damaged tool (especially a knee injury), can cause catastrophic damage to your income and your profession. **FCI**

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