

# Soft Lock Tile

## Installation Instructions

Soft Lock Tiles are 3/8" EVA foam tiles that connect quickly and easily with no adhesives. Soft Lock Tile packs include (6) 24" x 24" Mats and (10) square edged Border Tiles, allowing you to provide a clean finished edge around the full perimeter of your installed mats with no cutting required!

The following will make wall-to-wall installation of Soft Lock Tile quick and easy:

- Chalk line
- Utility knife to cut the tiles to shape
- Carpenter's Square
- 24" – 36" thin metal ruler (or similar straight edge)
- Knee pads (optional for comfort)

### Surface Preparation

Soft Lock Tiles may be installed over any smooth, hard surface, including wood, stone, ceramic tile, VCT, linoleum, and concrete. Mats are not recommended for use over carpet, as they will shift. The floor surface does not need to be treated in any way prior to installation, but it should be clean, dry, and free of dirt, sand, and dust to minimize movement of the tiles. Make certain that sub-floor is free of protruding nail heads or other sharp protrusions that can cause damage to the underside of the tiles.

Soft Lock Tiles are not recommended for use over sub-floors that are heated by radiant heat coils, as the insulative characteristics of the tiles will not allow for the efficient transfer of heat. If the tiles are used over heated sub-floors, we recommend that temperature of the flooring not exceed 85° F to prevent issues caused by expansion of the tiles.

### Storage

Store tiles in the room in which you plan to install for 24 hours. Keep room temperature at a minimum of 65° F and a maximum of 85° F during that time and during the installation of the tiles.

### Installation

#### ***Layout Option 1: Standard Freestanding Mats***

Option 1 is the most popular option. If location of Soft Lock Tiles within room will allow you to access mats on all four sides, simply lay out mats smooth side down in the color pattern you have selected, and connect mats into place by hand. Snap on square edged Border Tiles around the outside perimeter of the installed mats and your installation is complete. No cutting or measuring is required.

### ***Layout Option 2: Wall to Wall WITH Border Tiles***

Determine the starting point by finding the corner of the room where the two longest walls come together, and begin your installation in that corner. Attach two border tiles smooth side down to mat on sides of mat that butt the two corner walls, leaving tile the recommended distance off of walls to allow for expansion. (See *Expansion Guide Table below.*) With this corner mat in place, continue to install additional full mats the full length of one wall, with one border tile attached to the wall side of each mat. After this first row is complete, go back to corner in which you started and install tiles along the other wall in the same manner, with one border tile attached to the wall side of each mat, installing full mats the full length of the wall.

When you have completed installation of the tiles against these two walls, go back to the corner and install the remainder of the full tiles that do not need to be cut. Measure and cut remaining tiles into place using a straight edge and utility knife.

### ***Layout Option 3: Wall to Wall WITHOUT Border Tiles***

#### **LAYING OUT THE FLOOR**

Find the center of the room by snapping a chalk line in the middle of the width and the middle of the length of the floor. Where these two lines intersect is the exact middle of your floor. This will be your starting point as you begin to lay your tile.

Check to make sure your chalk lines are square with a carpenter's square. Lay the carpenter's square up against the lines to see if they track the same way as the carpenter's square. If you find they don't, just mark the proper lines with a pencil, wipe up your old chalk lines and re-snap a new one indicating the correct line.

Start laying the tiles by placing the tiles smooth side down in an L fashion using your chalk lines as a guide. Once you've laid out both Ls, you will be able to see if you're centered or if you need to adjust the tiles. If so, snap new chalk lines and repeat.

Once you're sure of the placement, put down the first tile in the center of the floor, so that it's square with your chalk lines. Then, continue moving toward the walls in the same L shape. Move into each quadrant first by creating the L shape and then by filling in the pyramid from the center out, installing all full tiles in this manner. This will help keep things square.

#### **CUTTING THE TILES**

Tiles may be easily cut to any size with a standard utility knife and a thin, metal straight edge. In order to create an easy template for trimming tiles into place along the walls, you'll need two pieces of flooring and your utility knife. Place one directly on top of the last one laid, closest to the wall. Then take the second one and place it up against the wall so that it overlaps onto the first. Allow recommended expansion gap at walls to allow for expansion and contraction of the tile. (See *Expansion Guide Table below.*) At this point you'll need to mark where the tiles overlap onto the first tile and then cut it with your knife.

For border pieces that are more difficult because of their size or shape, cut a piece of cardboard and use it as a template of how the tile should fit. Transfer that shape to your tile and cut it out and place onto the floor.

## Expansion Guide Table

Tiles will expand and contract based upon changes in temperature and humidity. When installing tiles in wall-to-wall applications, an expansion gap must be left between the tiles and the walls to allow for the normal dimensional changes of the free-floating tiles.

Room Width	Expansion Gap
Up to 16'	$\frac{1}{4}$ "
16' to 24'	$\frac{3}{8}$ "
24' to 32'	$\frac{1}{2}$ "
32' to 40'	$\frac{5}{8}$ "
40' to 48'	$\frac{3}{4}$ "

As a general rule, you will require a *total* expansion of  $\frac{1}{32}$ " per foot of room width. This gap is easily covered with simple floor moldings installed to allow for easy expansion.

## Special Conditions

### ***High Impact Exercise***

Increased rigidity may be achieved by using duct tape on the underside of the tiles to prevent separation of the tiles at the interlocks during aggressive workout routines. If a more permanent installation is required, tiles may be installed using an adhesive such as Goop or Liquid Nails to bond tiles to the sub-floor.

### ***Outdoors***

Soft Lock Tiles are designed primarily for indoor applications. While tiles may have some limited outdoor applications in areas where they are not exposed to direct sunlight or extreme changes in temperature, mats used outdoors will fade significantly, and—depending upon conditions—may curl, expand, or buckle.

### ***Sharp Objects***

Soft Lock tiles are NOT recommended for installation in areas where they will be subject to high heels, table or chair legs, pet claws, or other sharp objects. The mats are manufactured using EVA foam, which will leave indentations that are permanent. To minimize dents, make certain to use floor protectors that are flat, smooth, and wide—2" or greater to maximize the surface area over which the weight of the object is spread.