

# A Kinder, Gentler Garage Floor

PVC flooring creates a beautiful  
and durable surface BY MIKE BERGER



PVC flooring creates a high-end appearance as well as a dry, warm work surface that's comfortable underfoot.

**In times past**, a garage was merely a place to shelter your vehicle from the elements. But today it can serve as a workshop, as a place to display prized possessions or even as additional living and entertainment space. For all of these functions, you'll probably want to make the space more comfortable and attractive, and PVC flooring is a great way to start.

Available in interlocking tiles, individual mats or large rolls, PVC flooring can transform your garage into a place where you actually want to spend time. And because it is durable, affordable, simple to install and easy to maintain, it's a smart choice for a wide variety of applications.

## The benefits of PVC flooring

Though other types of floor coverings (such as polypropylene tiles and epoxy coatings) can be used in

## THE HISTORY OF PVC

Polyvinyl chloride, better known as PVC or vinyl, is an inexpensive, versatile plastic that's used to manufacture a variety of items, including phonograph records, drainage and potable piping, water bottles, credit cards, home siding and toys. Typically thought of as hard and rigid, it can be made softer and more flexible by the addition of plasticizers (usually phthalates). In this form, it is used in clothing and upholstery and to make flexible hoses, tubing, roofing membranes, electrical cable insulation and flooring.

PVC was accidentally discovered in the 19th century, but it wasn't until the early 20th century that Russian chemist Ivan Ostromislensky and Fritz Klatte of the German chemical company Griesheim-Elektron both attempted to use PVC in commercial products, only to be thwarted by difficulties in processing. In 1926 Waldo Semon and the B.F. Goodrich Co. developed a method to plasticize PVC, and the result was a more flexible and more easily processed material that soon achieved widespread commercial use. — MB



the garage, PVC flooring (such as G-Floor from Better Life Technology; see SOURCES ONLINE) has several unique benefits that make it ideally suited for this application. First, it creates a softer, cushioned floor surface that's more comfortable to stand on for long periods of time. It is nonconductive and has anti-static properties, is easy to cut and clean and resists damage from common garage contaminants. And because PVC flooring insulates a concrete floor and serves as a vapor barrier, your garage will be both warmer and drier.

Because PVC flooring comes in rolls, the only seam you'll have in a typical two-car garage installation is where two rolls meet (whereas snap-together polypropylene tiles create hundreds of seams). For a single-car garage, there would be no seam, as one roll is typically wide enough to span the entire floor. Although damaging liquids (such as salt-laden snowmelt) will generally be trapped by the embossed pattern of the flooring, it's a simple matter to lift the PVC aside to dry any liquids that manage to leak through a seam.

PVC offers these advantages over DIY epoxy coatings: You don't have to mix chemicals; you don't have to wait to drive on it (as soon as you've unrolled the material, it's ready for use); and you'll never have to worry that it will fail and lift away from the concrete surface.

PVC flooring comes in a variety of thicknesses. The standard 55-mil flooring (about the thickness of a penny) is suited for most home garage applications; heavier gauges (75-mil and 85-mil) are available for surfaces that must withstand extremely hard use. In addition to its other advantages, PVC flooring is very budget-friendly: 75-mil PVC typically retails for \$2 to \$2.50 a square foot. Compared with polypropylene floor tiles, which typically sell for \$3 to \$5 a square foot, the savings quickly add up.

## Installing PVC flooring

Unless your garage floor has serious cracks or divots, you can install PVC flooring directly over the concrete surface with very little preparation. Start by emp-



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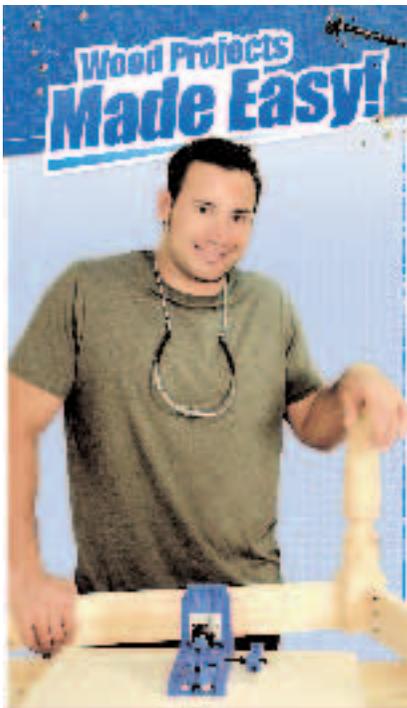
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**1**

Before installation, sweep the garage floor clean; then unroll the material. Start at the garage door and work toward the rear. In cool conditions it may take 72 hours for the flooring to lie flat.



**2**

Use indoor-outdoor double-sided carpet tape to adhere the edges where two rolls meet.

Carpet tape



**3**

Push out any trapped air bubbles beneath the flooring with a broom. Use a sharp knife or scissors to trim the material to fit around cabinets or other obstacles.



**4**

Apply spray adhesive that's rated for rubber and vinyl (such as 3M's 80 Rubber and Vinyl Adhesive) to adhere the edges of the material to the concrete floor.

tying your garage and sweeping the floor; then unroll the material. (PVC rolls can be heavy, so ask a friend to help.) Start at the garage door and work your way toward the rear (photo 1, opposite). If you're working in cool conditions, allow ample time (up to 72 hours) for the flooring to lie flat before proceeding.

After positioning the PVC sheets where you want them, use scissors to trim the material to fit around any obstructions; then use indoor-outdoor double-sided carpet tape to adhere the edges of opposing PVC sheets to the concrete where they meet (photo 2). For an even easier installation, simply overlap sheets by a couple of inches.

Use a broom to push out any air bubbles trapped beneath the material (photo 3). If you wish, you can use a spray adhesive that's rated for rubber and vinyl (such as 3M's 80 Rubber and Vinyl Adhesive) to adhere the edges of the material to the concrete floor (photo 4). All that's left is to bring your tools and other equipment back into the garage, kick back and admire the results. Warning: Your new garage floor will look so nice that you may not want to walk on it! ♦

### WEB EXTRAS

For more information on other garage flooring options, go to [www.HandymanClub.com](http://www.HandymanClub.com) and click on WEB EXTRAS.

### SOURCES ONLINE

For online information, go to [www.HandymanClub.com](http://www.HandymanClub.com) and click on WEB EXTRAS.

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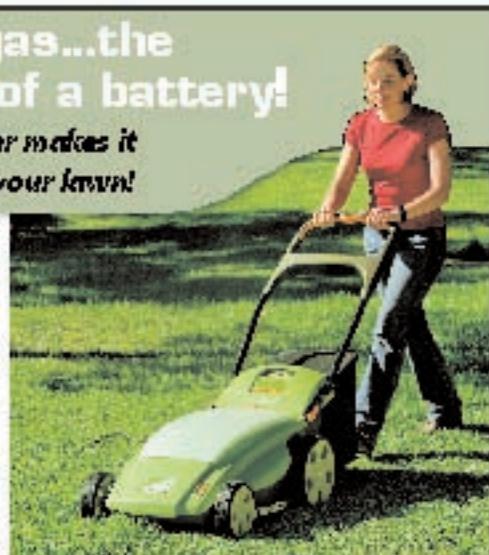
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