



Installation Guide

PIONITE®

DECORATIVE SURFACES

Pionite decorative laminates are designed for finished interior surfaces which require high impact, wear and stain resistance and minimal maintenance. Pionite laminate is available in a wide variety of colors, patterns and surface finishes.

This guide is designed to provide any do-it-yourself enthusiast with the information necessary to perform two types of laminate installation: the installation of a ready-made postformed Pionite countertop and the application of laminate sheets to a prepared substrate.

Do it yourself

Installing Pionite laminate can be a very rewarding job, and you don't need years of woodworking experience to do it yourself. If you read this complete guide **before** you begin your project, and ask your Pionite dealer any questions you may have in advance, you can achieve professional looking results.

One of the most important steps in the laminate installation process is to accurately measure the area that will be surfaced. This step is critical, so if you do not feel comfortable taking these measurements yourself, ask your local Pionite dealer for proper measurement techniques.

INSTALLATION TOOLS

- Measuring tape
- Square
- Keyhole saw
- Paint brush
- Wood screws
- Masking tape
- Miter bolts (*supplied with postformed tops*)
- Coarse and fine file
- Scriber's compass
- Hand saw (10-12 teeth)
- 30 grit sandpaper
- Latex caulk
- J Roller
- Level
- Rubber mallet or hammer
- Contact cement
- Drill
- Carpenter's glue
- Wrench for miter bolts

OPTIONAL TOOLS

- Belt sander
- Sabre saw
- Block plane
- Saw horses
- High speed router with carbide bits
- Circular saw with laminate blade

If you will be removing a sink or range you will need additional tools to disconnect electrical and plumbing connections.

INSTALLATION OF READY-MADE POSTFORMED COUNTERTOPS

Removal of existing countertop

If you are replacing an existing countertop, now is the time to remove it. You may want to use your existing sink or range cutout as a template on the new top so take care in its removal. The following steps will guide you through removal of your old countertop.

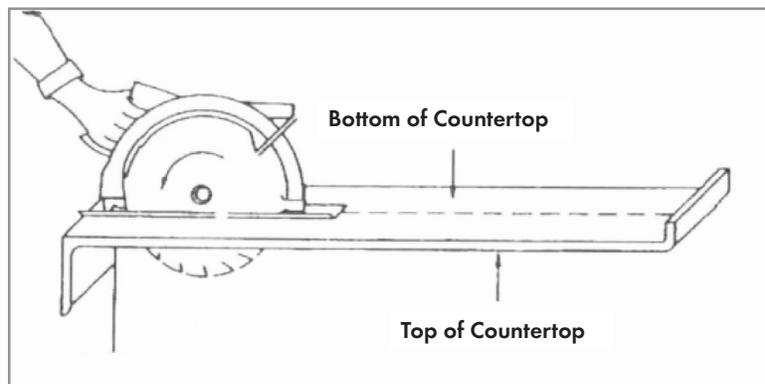
Caution: Safety glasses and gloves should be worn during this process and are recommended throughout the installation process.

1. Be sure that the water, gas, electricity and any other utilities in your immediate work area are turned off before you begin your work.
2. Disconnect the water supply and drain from the sink.
3. Remove the sink fasteners that hold the sink to the countertop and lift the sink from the cutout.
4. If a range top is present, disconnect the electrical service, loosen any fasteners and remove the range from the cutout.
5. Remove all fasteners that hold the countertop to the cabinet supports.
6. Lift the old countertop off the cabinets and save any cutouts to use as a template on the new countertop.

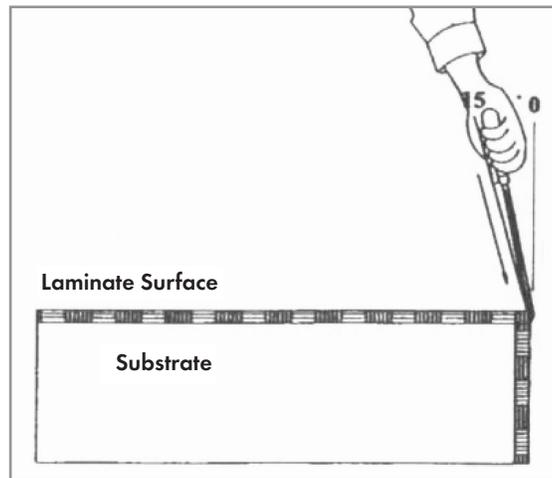
Cutting to length

If your new top has already been cut to length and provided with the necessary cutouts for your installation, you may skip ahead to the next section. (**Note:** Countertops requiring miter joints, should be ordered with the pre-cut miters.) If you purchased your countertop in a standard length, however, and need to cut it for your application, follow these steps.

1. To assure proper fit and verify squareness, measure the required length of your countertop, both at front and back sides.
2. Use a square and tape measure to mark the cut line on the countertop. If you are using a hand saw, mark the cut line on the decorative side of the countertop. If you are using a circular saw, mark the cut line on the back of the countertop.
3. If cutting with a hand saw, cut from the decorative side and apply force ONLY on the down stroke to create a clean, chip free cut.
4. If cutting with a circular saw, cut from the back of the countertop. Don't force the saw, maintain a high blade speed. To protect the decorative surface during fabrication, lay the new top face down on a blanket, piece of cardboard, or other protective material.



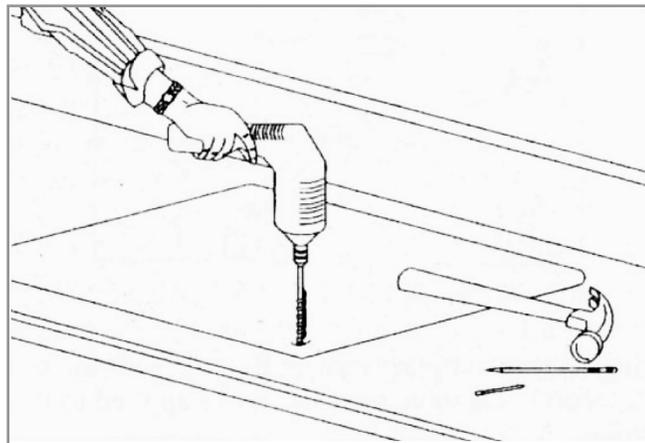
5. To minimize the development of cracks in the surface, smooth the cut edge with a file or sanding block. Place the countertop so the decorative surface is on top. File or sand the cut edge in the downward direction. DO NOT file or sand toward the decorative surface as this may cause chipping.



Making cutouts

Tip: Double check all measurements before you actually begin making cutouts.

1. If you need to make a sink or range cutout, use your measurements or the old top as a template to mark the cut lines on the new top. If you are cutting with a hand saw, mark the cut line on the decorative side of the countertop. If you are using a sabre saw, mark the cut line on the back of the countertop.
2. Drill a hole inside the cut line in each corner of the cutout.

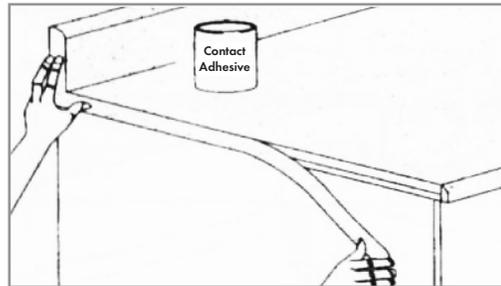


3. If cutting with a key hole saw, cut from the decorative side and apply force ONLY on the down stroke to create a clean, chip-free cut.
4. If cutting with a circular saw, cut from the back of the countertop. Don't force the saw, maintain a high blade speed.
5. To minimize the development of cracks, finish the cut edge with a file or sandpaper. Place the countertop so the decorative surface is on top. File or sand the cut edge in the downward direction, DO NOT file or sand toward the decorative surface as this may cause chipping. To avoid stress cracks be sure to *round* all inside corners of your cutouts.
6. In sink cutouts, seal the edges of the substrate with adhesive or polyurethane to provide an extra moisture barrier.

Installing end caps

If the end of your countertop will be butted up to a wall, end cap installation is not required. If the end of the countertop is exposed, however, now is the time to install the end cap. An end cap is a shaped piece of Pionite laminate made of the same design as your countertop. Installing end caps requires the use of contact cement. Contact cement is easy to use and forms a strong bond. For best bonding results, follow the manufacturer's instructions on the container label.

1. Cut a piece of wood to fill in the end of the countertop so it is the same thickness from front to back.



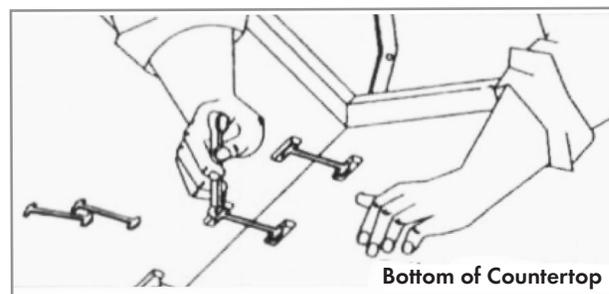
2. Use a paint brush to apply contact cement to the end of the countertop and the back of the end cap. A second coat of cement should be applied to the countertop end after the first coat has dried.
3. When the contact cement is dry, carefully position the cap on the end of the countertop.
(**Note:** Once the end cap is joined to the countertop it cannot be repositioned.)
4. Roll the entire end cap with a J roller or tap with a rubber mallet to ensure a strong bond.
5. If necessary, finish the edges of the end cap with a file or sandpaper. Remember to file or sand in the direction that minimizes chipping.

Mitered corners

If your countertop is U or L-shaped, you will need to connect pre-cut miter joints.

(**Note:** Miter joints cannot be cut with a circular saw. Countertops requiring miter joints should be ordered with **pre-cut** miters.)

1. Position the countertop sections upside down on saw horses using a blanket or cardboard to protect the decorative surface.
2. Apply carpenter's glue or white glue to the inside edges of the miter joints.
3. Butt the two pieces together and begin tightening the miter bolts that were supplied with your countertop.



4. As the bolts are tightened, be sure to constantly check the alignment on the decorative side of the two pieces to ensure they are flush and level to each other.
5. When the bolts have been tightened, drive a few small nails from one backsplash into another. Be sure the nails are directed away from the decorative surface so as not to break through.
6. Repeat these steps for any other mitered corners.

Assuring proper clearance

Before you place your assembled countertop on the cabinets, be sure that you have enough clearance between the bottom edge of the countertop and any drawers, doors or appliances. If necessary, shim the countertop with strips of wood to raise it off the cabinets slightly.

HOW TO SHIM YOUR COUNTERTOP

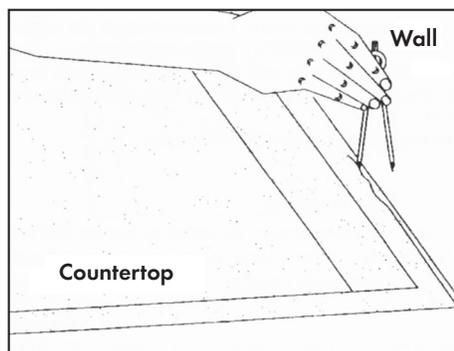
1. Cut the shims to the appropriate width needed to achieve adequate clearance.
2. Shims can be screwed or nailed along the edges of the countertop and along any cutouts and mitered joints. Make sure nails and screws are short enough so that they will not penetrate the laminate.
3. Shims should be no more than two feet apart.

Positioning your countertop

You may need someone to help you pick up your assembled Pionite countertop and place it on your cabinets. Check the fit again for drawer or appliance clearance. Make sure there are no obstructions under the sink or range cutouts. Check the fit of the backsplash against the wall. If there is a tight fit between the backsplash and the wall, you can proceed to the next section for directions on how to fasten your countertop to the cabinets. If you have varying gaps between the backsplash and the wall, however, you may want to scribe the backsplash to get a better fit.

SCRIBING YOUR BACKSPLASH

1. Pull the countertop approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the wall and position it parallel with the cabinets.
2. Place a piece of masking tape along the top edge of the backsplash.
3. Take the scribe's compass and adjust it so it is spread as wide as the largest gap between the backsplash and the countertop.
4. With the compass fixed, run the point along the wall and the pencil along the backsplash. The pencil should leave a mark on top of the backsplash.



5. Use a belt sander or block plane to remove the area of the backsplash that is outside the pencil mark.
6. Slide the countertop back against the wall and check the fit. Repeat steps 1 through 5 if necessary.

Finishing touches

It is now time to fasten the countertop to the cabinets. Use short wood screws that will not penetrate the laminate. For added support use washers on every screw.

1. Screw through the cabinet structure into the bottom of the countertop.
2. If necessary, replace the sink and range in the reverse order that they were removed.
Apply caulking or plumbers putty around the sink cutout for a tight seal.
3. Reconnect all plumbing and drain fixtures.
4. Reconnect all electrical fixtures.
5. Have utilities turned on and checked for proper operation.
6. Seal the seam between the wall and backsplash with caulking for a clean appearance.

Stand back and take a look at your handiwork! Your new Pionite countertop is ready to provide years of service!

APPLYING PIONITE TO A PREPARED SUBSTRATE

Taking accurate measurements

Measure the entire area you will be covering with laminate to determine the laminate size that will produce the fewest seams and provide the best yield. Consider whether or not the pattern you are applying is directional (e.g. woodgrain). In your measurements be sure to include all ends and edges and allow for cut and trim waste.

Preparing your surface

Laminate should be applied to a suitable substrate such as particleboard or medium density fiberboard (MDF). Concrete, gypsum and sheet rock are not recommended substrates for laminate application.

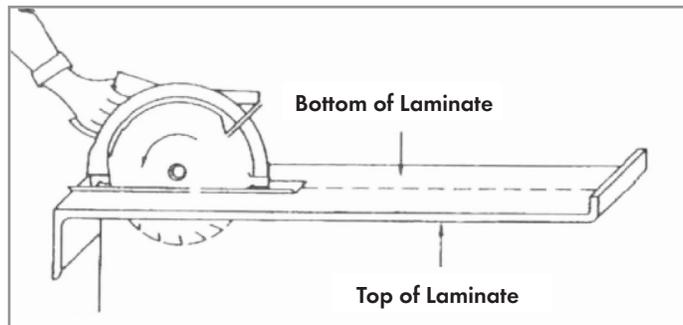
Proper conditioning of the laminate and substrate is recommended to prevent possible warping, shrinking or expansion of assembled panels. Ideally, all components should be conditioned at 70°F to 75°F (21°C to 25°C) and 45 to 50 percent relative humidity for 48 hours prior to assembly.

If possible, remove any paint, varnish or other surface covering from the substrate prior to applying laminate. For best results, new substrate is recommended.

All screws and nails should be secure and sunk into the substrate. Fill nail and screw holes with wood fill and sand flush. Vacuum or wipe the substrate to ensure it is dust free. If you need to remove any range tops or sinks, refer to the "Removal of Existing Countertop" procedure in the "Installation of Ready-Made Postformed Countertops" section of this guide.

Cutting to length

1. Your Pionite laminate should be cut approximately ¼" wider and longer than you need. The finish cut is made after the sheet is installed. For best cutting results, run masking tape along the desired cut mark.
2. Use a square and tape measure to mark the cut line on the countertop. If you are using a hand saw, mark the cut line on the decorative side of the countertop. If you are using a circular saw, mark the cut line on the back of the countertop.
3. Make sure the sheet is adequately supported when cutting.
4. If cutting with a hand saw, cut from the decorative side and apply force ONLY on the down stroke to create a clean, chip free cut.
5. If cutting with a circular saw, cut from the back of the sheet. Don't force the saw, maintain a high blade speed.



6. If you need to cut narrow strips of Pionite laminate for edgebanding, a table saw can be used. For best results, use a fine-tooth, carbide-tipped blade and cut the laminate with the decorative face up.

Adhering the laminate

For a neat appearance adhere laminate to all substrate edges and ends before applying the top sheet. This method also prevents water or dirt from building up in the seams of the edges. Contact cement adhesive is recommended for this step because it is easy to use and forms a strong bond. For best bonding results, follow the manufacturer's instructions on the container label.

There are several techniques that can help you correctly position your Pionite laminate before it is permanently placed. Small wood strips or old venetian blinds can be placed between the substrate and the laminate, allowing the laminate to be properly positioned before application. When the laminate is properly positioned the strips can be removed one by one.

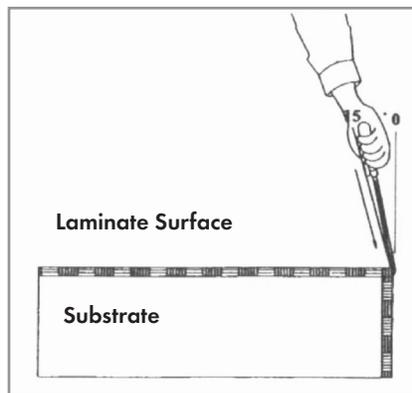
1. Apply contact cement to the edges and ends of the substrate using a paint brush or solvent-resistant roller. For a good bond, apply a second coat of cement to the substrate after the first coat has dried. **Caution:** Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions found on the cement container label. Some cements are flammable and should not be used near an open flame. Do not smoke while using contact cement.
2. Apply cement to the back of the laminate. Be sure all edges are adequately covered with cement to prevent the laminate from lifting up at the corners.
3. When the substrate and laminate surfaces are dry, they can be joined together. (**Note:** Be sure the contact cement is completely dry. Some water-based cements take longer to dry in cool, damp environments.) Take your time and position the laminate before joining it to the substrate.
4. Finish the edges of the piece you just installed, making sure it is flush with all surfaces. Edges can be finished with a file or sandpaper. File or sand the edge in a motion from the decorative surface to the substrate. (Do NOT file or sand toward the decorative surface as chipping may occur). This will provide a smooth edge on the laminate and eliminate the chance of cracks forming from the saw cut.

5. Apply cement to the substrate and back side of the laminate top. Again, for best bond strength, apply two coats of cement to the substrate. Make sure there is adequate cement coverage on the laminate edges to prevent corners from lifting up.
6. When cement is dry, lay several separator strips of wood or blinds on the top.
(Note: It is imperative that the adhesive is completely dry, especially when gluing large surfaces. For best results, do not try to rush this step.)
7. Position the laminate on the surface. Remove the center separator strip and use a J roller or rubber mallet to create a strong bond.
8. Work from the middle out, removing the separator strips one at a time and forming a strong bond.

Finishing touches

All you have left to do is to finish the edges of the laminate and make any necessary range or sink cutouts.

1. Trim laminate overhang with a file, sandpaper or router. Be sure not to damage the laminate on the edges and ends. All saw cuts should be finished to prevent cracks developing from a rough cut.



2. Cutouts can be made with a sabre saw or router. All inside corners should be rounded.
3. If necessary replace the sink and range in the reverse order that they were removed.
Apply caulking or plumbers putty around the sink cutout for a tight seal.
4. Reconnect all plumbing and drain fixtures.
5. Reconnect all electrical fixtures.
6. Have utilities turned on and checked for proper operation.

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