

TRIAD HOMES

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HOUSE HELPER

Q: I'm planning to replace the floors in my kitchen, dining room and den, partially in an effort to fix unevenness. Can you recommend the best materials (for example, tile or hardwood) and application methods for helping to level an uneven floor?

A: There are many methods to leveling an uneven floor. However, the first order of business is to find out why the floor has become uneven. Generally, there are three reasons:

- Settling or failure of the house foundation.
- Sagging of the plywood sitting across the floor joist.
- Sagging or crowning of the wood joist supporting the sub-floor.

Repairing the underlying problem is the first step, and the methods for each situation are outlined below.

• **Settling foundation:** If the foundation has settled, but is no longer moving, then the floor can be leveled by applying self-leveling compound. This can be purchased at your local hardware store and it is applied by mixing with water and pouring it on the floor and smoothing out with a trowel. Use a level to be sure you are applying the correct amount across the entire floor.

If, however, your foundation is still moving, you will need to have a professional contractor shore up the foundation.

• **Sagging plywood:** If your floor seems to flex, then most likely the plywood is too thin for the span of the floor joist. One solution is to overlay the existing plywood with an additional layer and screw it down to the floor joist. This will tighten the floor considerably, but it will also raise your floor by the thickness of the plywood.

Other methods include removing the existing subfloor and replacing or installing support blocking between the floor joists, beneath the sagging plywood.

• **Sagging or crowning joists:** This is by far the most common problem and the easiest to fix. From below the floor, install shims between the subfloor and the joist to level out the subfloor. Then, screw down through the subfloor and the shim into the joist to secure it. If for some reason the underside is not accessible, then the other option is a self-leveling compound.

Once the floor has been leveled, you can apply the floor covering of your choice.

House Helper answers are provided by area industry professionals and are the opinions of our experts. Triad Homes does not make any representations as to opinions and facts.

If you have a question that can be answered by a Realtor, remodeler, builder or mortgage loan adviser, please send it to Heather L. Modlin at heather.modlin@news-record.com or by fax to 373-5956.

About our contributor

Tom Garcia is the owner of Southern



Evergreen, Greensboro's exclusive Southern Living custom homebuilder. He can be reached at 286-3886.