

Caring For Your New Hardwood Floor

General Overview: Floors with urethane finishes are extremely durable. With just minimal care your floor will look beautiful for years to come. The key to preserving your floor is to protect its finish. Urethane finished floors require minimal care, but it is important that you provide regular maintenance. It is particularly important to remove grit from the floor before it can be ground into the finish. Sweep the floor regularly and suction vacuum at least weekly. Regardless of its finish your floor will quickly lose its luster if exposed to water. More serious damage from water is also possible, including warping and other problems if water is ignored. **Never wet mop** a hardwood floor or leave spills unattended for long periods of time. Clean up spills before they turn into stains or damage the finish. For stubborn, sticky spills a damp mopping with an approved cleaner may be used. Refinishing (top coating) will only be necessary once the weekly care fails to restore the floor's shine. Of course, never apply a wax to a floor with a urethane finish.

Precautions / Care: One of the biggest enemies to a hardwood floor's urethane finish coat is grit. Sand, dirt and fine particles (grit) will, over time, be tracked onto any floor surface by normal foot traffic. When compressed under footwear grit will act as an abrasive agent. Over a prolonged period of time, this abrasiveness will dull urethane finishes, cause scuff marks, and eventually wear through the floor's urethane coating. To prevent this abrasive wear from occurring, it is essential that grit is removed from the hardwood floor whenever it is present. This is commonly a few times a week.

Sweep or dust mop your floors regularly. A good broom that features exploded tips to trap dust and dirt is best. Dust mops can also be helpful in keeping dirt, dust, and grit under control. Use of a Swifter™ or similar *dry* floor pad is very helpful for fast day to day cleaning. Vacuuming is also recommended for grit/dirt removal. The use of a vacuum with a soft bristle suction attachment will do the job nicely. Never use an upright vacuum with rolling beater bars. They can cause scratches and dents in your floor's finish and wood surface.

DO's & DON'T's

DON'T: EVER stick masking, blue painter's or any other type of tape onto the urethane surface. The glue will react with urethane and will may peel the finish! Even low tack tape will have a chemical reaction with polyurethane!

DO: Swifter, sweep or suction vacuum consistently.

DO: Wipe up any spills immediately with a soft, dry cloth.

DON'T: Wet mop a hardwood floor!

DO: Occasionally damp mop with a well rung-out sponge mop. Mild water soluble soap is o.k. as long as it is not allowed to dry onto the floor.

DON'T: Use any cleaning products unless it is specifically approved for no-wax hardwood polyurethane floors. The wrong product can make your floor dull and cause adhesion problems the next time you topcoat.

Furniture

DO: Place glides made of felt or fabric under the legs of furniture to prevent scratches. Clean the glides regularly to ensure that dust and grit do not become imbedded. Change yearly.

DO: Completely lift furniture when moving it to avoid scratches and gouges in the floor's surface.

DON'T: Drag, slide or push furniture across your hardwood floor! Heavy couches, dressers and bulky furniture can rut, gouge, and/or compress the hardwood surface. Be cautious with dining room and other chairs. The full weight of a person sliding back on them can do the same damage as heavy furniture if gliders are worn or missing..

DON'T: EVER EVER move a refrigerator, dishwasher, oven or piano without placing down building paper and wood sheeting (thin ¼" plywood or luan) in front of and under them. The weight of these heavy items will

drastically compress the grain of your hardwood floor, leaving a heavy gouge like ruts. Wood sheeting will absorb the compressive weight, while the paper underneath will protect from minor scratches.

DO: Use barrel-type casters instead of ball casters to prevent dents.

DO: Use non-marking rubber casters instead of plastic or metal.

Shoes

DO: Make sure there are no exposed nails or metal heel supports on shoes that could scratch or dent the floor.

DO: Check boots that have deep treads to ensure that any trapped dirt or gravel won't scratch or dent the floor.

DO: Be aware that high heels on even a very petite woman can dent a hardwood floor, leaving small pock marks.

DO: Be very careful while walking in socks on refinished hardwood steps. Dust may cause them to be slippery.

Area Rugs & Mats

DO: Use area rugs or runners inside doorways and areas such as kitchens where spills are likely to occur.

DO: Use doormats inside and outside of your home entrances to help trap dirt and grit. Clean them regularly. A mat in front of the kitchen sink is also advisable.

DON'T: Use throw rugs with rubber/vinyl backing without checking to determine if they will affect your floor's finish. Some materials in the backing can react with polyurethane - discoloring or causing the finish to become dull.

DON'T: Let even mildly damp throw or scatter rugs sit on the floor. Check the rugs frequently and make sure damp rugs are removed.

Sunlight - Ultraviolet radiation in sunlight can cause discoloration over time. Commonly called "Sun Bleaching"

DO: Protect your floors by using sheer drapes, curtains, or blinds to limit sunlight.

DO: Move your area carpets or throw rugs occasionally to maintain a uniform appearance in the floor's finish.

When is it time to recoat?

Properly maintained, hardwood floors can last a lifetime without having to fully resand them. Over time, any hardwood finish will eventually begin to wear. The key is to recognize when they are wearing and have your floor recoated with an additional application, or "top coating", of polyurethane before it's too late.

A quick visual indication is when the high-traffic center walkway areas have fully lost their sheen while, in comparison, the no-traffic edges/sides of the floor still appear untouched.

Try wiping the floor with a damp sponge. If dull areas and minor white scuffs disappear when damp, then a top coat will permanently hide any of these concerning areas. If you have gouge marks or grey/black embedded dirt spots in the floor, it will require a complete resanding. Essentially, if a concerning mark disappears when you wipe it with a damp sponge, it will disappear permanently with a polyurethane topcoat. If it remains it will require sanding to remove.

When it is time for a top coating, the procedure can be performed in a single day. A quick screening of the existing urethane will remove any light surface dirt and slightly abrade the floor. This allows a new coat of polyurethane to properly adhere over it. The procedure is the same as that which is performed during the final coat of the original sanding and refinishing process. If your floor has ever been waxed this topcoat procedure CAN NOT be done – unfortunately urethane does not adhere to wax!

Thank-you for using Inter-County Floor Sanding and we look forward to serving you in the future.