



Hardwood Flooring Care and Maintenance

Importance of Maintenance

Unlike most floor coverings, wood floors are a long-term investment that, correctly maintained, will last the lifetime of the home. Fortunately for consumers, today's wood floors offer a wide spectrum of product options that are easy to maintain. Unlike times past, when people had to get down on their knees to buff their wax floors, taking care of wood floors today require little effort. The routine maintenance involves protecting the finish from scratches and moisture. If consumers avoid both of those things, they've got a handle on most of their wood floor care.

Educating the Consumer

Creating realistic expectations of the wood floor maintenance upfront, before the contract is even signed is important. Consumers who realize that their floors aren't impervious to an onslaught of spills, grit and water will be happier with their floors and less likely to call back with complaints in the future. That means explaining proper maintenance both preventive, such as using throw rugs and floor protectors, and routine, such as the use of the correct wood floor cleaner. (Many contractors include the cost of the cleaner in their job estimates or offer it as the floor is being completed.)

Consumers need to be made aware that using improper cleaners can void their warranty and also cause future problems with recoating.

Another area where you need to be up front with consumers is the recoat schedule. Depending on the traffic on the floor, most floors will need recoating at some point during the life of the floor. Tell them to call a wood flooring professional when they think the floor might need recoating. If the floor performs as you've said it will, the customer will feel confident calling you when it's time for a recoat.

A simple explanation of how humidity levels affect wood floor performance also helps avoid typical complaints about cracks between boards. In addition to a verbal explanation, give this information to the customer in writing.

Maintenance for All Hardwood Floors

While specific finish types may require different maintenance, some guidelines apply to the care of all wood floors. First, before furniture is placed onto the wood floor, floor protector pads should be installed on the bottom of all furniture legs. Also, rugs should be placed at all entrances to the area (check with the finish manufacturer for when these can be placed. Most should not go down on the floor for at least seven days, and sometimes more than 21 days after the finish is applied). These rugs help trap grit and also absorb moisture before either one has a chance to damage the finish. Rugs should be shaken out, cleaned and thoroughly dried when they get wet. Take special precautions with non-skid pads that are frequently placed under area rugs. These pads may imprint their pattern onto the finish and/or wood floor. (Natural fibers may not transfer as much as synthetic pads.) Also, be aware that area rugs may cause color differences in the floor due to differences in light exposure.

Consumers should expect that their floors will shrink and expand with changes in humidity, sometimes leaving small cracks between boards. To minimize the changes, it is recommended that consumers use some kind of humidity control in their homes.

Routine basic maintenance includes sweeping, vacuuming and/or dust-mopping to remove dirt and grit. (Use only vacuums that have a special hard-surface setting.) The more that dirt and grit are allowed to accumulate, the more they will be tracked over the floor, leaving scratches.

Some manufacturers recommend lightly damp-mopping a floor, while others do not. Regardless, household dust treatments should never be used. All shoes, especially high heels, should be kept in good repair — if they lose their protective cap, they will dent the surface of *any* floor. Pet nails need to be trimmed regularly to prevent finish and wood damage.

Be especially attentive to potential spill areas, such as dishwashers, sinks, icemakers and stove tops. Other potential problem spots may include household plants and Christmas tree stands.



Consumers see the best results if they develop a cleaning schedule and stick to it. In addition to their regular schedule, they should be aware that not only should they clean the floor immediately after a major event; they should clean immediately before it. (The increased traffic on the floor will result in more damage from any dirt or grit present on the floor.) These are just some of the basics.

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