

Wood Floor Cleaning Tips Continue:

How To Clean Wood Floors

Wood floors are beautiful, but they are a lot of work. The key is to keep them as clean as possible so you don't have to refinish your floors. It's not only incredibly difficult, expensive, and time-consuming; it will eventually ruin your floors. Every time you sand, you're taking off a layer of the wood. Frequent refinishing of your floors is not a good idea. With proper care, you can avoid having to refinish your hardwood floors.

The Dust Mop is Your Friend

You should have a dust mop and use it what might seem like constantly! A disposable cloth mop (like Swiffer) can actually damage your floor. A dust mop is softer, and will pick up particles that you might be scraping against the floor with a Swiffer or other disposable cloth dry mop.

Innocent little particles can do serious damage to wood floors. Every time you walk on them, you are grinding them in and scraping the floor. Spills can also be quickly grabbed with a dust mop. Get a dust mop where you can remove the mop part and wash it regularly.

Damp Mop for Cleaning

Chemicals can damage your wood flooring. Your best bet is to use a damp mop with clean water as often as possible when you clean your floors. If the floor is still dirty, only then should you move up to a stronger cleaning solution than water. You have to be careful even with water!

Water is the enemy of your wood floors. When you use a mop, don't apply it like you're in the navy and your job is to clean the deck – sloshing water all over the place. Any excess water can damage your floor. You should get a mop that you can wring, and you should wring it twice. Your mop should be damp, not wet.

For Tougher Cleaning

When the damp mop just isn't cutting it, you need a stronger solution to clean your wood floors. You can use a special cleaner for wood floors, preferably with a neutral pH. Follow the instructions on the label and dilute the cleaner in water. Once again, be gentle with the water. It's always a good idea to wring out your mop twice. Follow up with clean water isn't necessary with most of these cleaners. The label will specify.

You can try a homemade mixture of 1 cup white vinegar to 2 gallons of warm water. Cider vinegar is different from white vinegar, and you should not use it as a substitute. Apply it with only a damp mop, and then you should wipe it clean with a dry cloth or clean dust mop.

Clean Your Wood Floors with Tea!

The secret of everyone's grandmother that really works well is to clean your hardwood floors with tea. You can't use instant; you have to brew it. And you have to brew it STRONG. We are talking anywhere from 5-20 tea bags in 2 quarts of water. Experiment with the number until you find a solution you like. If you've never heard of cleaning wood floors with water, you'll probably be amazed with the results. It cleans, brings out the grain of the wood, and adds a nice shine. No rinsing with water is required and remember – damp mop only!

We usually use a vinegar and water solution by mixing 1 cup of plain white vinegar to 1 gallon of warm water to make a mild deodorizing cleaning solution that does not need rinsed and leaves no streaks or residue.

1. Work on one small area at a time
2. Dip a cotton cleaning cloth or mop into the mixture and squeeze out most of the liquid.
3. Wipe or mop the floor without spreading the liquid and getting it soaking wet.
4. Immediately dry with another cloth or towel bring out the shine and luster.
5. Do not allow your wood floors to get too wet and by wiping it dry you will not have any water spots.

If you have Swedish finished wood floors, the finish will come off with time and wear. Do not wax these floors, do not use wood polish. Call a specialty company and have the floor surface refinished.

Waxing Hard Wood Floors

By hard wood, we mean older wood floors that have not been finished with an epoxy type resin (called Swedish finish wood) These floors are found in older buildings and though incredibly beautiful if properly maintained require a different type of cleaning than the newer epoxy coated wood.

If your vacuum or dust mop does not restore the shine and luster to your wood floor, (again not Swedish finish) try buffing the floor to restore the shine rather than applying more wax. Buffing should always be tried first as it will often restore a nice shine and luster without adding another layer of waxy build-up.

If buffing does not work, you will need to first apply a specific wood floor cleaner such as Murphy Oil Soap cleaner or other hardwood floor cleaner and a liquid wax that is made specifically for wood floors. After the wax is applied, let it dry, and then buff it again.

How To Wax Swedish Finish Floors

The answer is; don't ever use wax. Swedish finish wood is covered in an epoxy resin, that does not need and will not benefit from a wax. If using a dust mop does not shine to your Swedish finished hard wood, try using a cleaner recommended by the manufacturer.

Here is a true story:

My sister, was the proud owner of a new home with Swedish finish wood floors. The floors were scuffed and dirty looking when she moved in. She tried every thing under the sun to make them shiny. When my family and I arrived to see her home, my kids went sliding and almost hit the wall because the floors were so slippery. This is not an exaggeration, this was a serious safety hazard. After asking her what was going on with the slick surface, she disclosed that the floors looked so bad, she had tried every cleaner under the sun to restore the luster. None of them worked, so she had finally resorted to some kind of furniture wood polish. The oily kind that you spray on your real wood furniture.

So the oily polish on top of the epoxy made this floor worse than walking on pure ice. I explained to my sister that the wood surface was coated with an epoxy, the polish and wax would not help, and could actually harm the surface depending on whatever chemical she used.

Swedish finish does not need a thing to make it shine brightly, though the epoxy finish will spot if any cleaning residue is left on it. I have researched and tested this. We are a good sized company with thousand of clients and we spend 10's of thousands in cleaning products each year. It's not worth it to buy a substandard product if the client complains and I need to send out another team to re clean the floors.

We use a solution of 1 cup of vinegar to 1 gallon of water. The vinegar smell dissipates quickly, it is a natural germ killer and deodorizer that leaves no residue and makes the floor shine brightly. No rinsing required.

If vinegar and water does not work for you, likely the floor needs a new surface finish. Remember that you should not wax a surface finished floor, but you might need to contact a wood floor finisher and have the floor surface reapplied..

If you use an oil based cleaner on a polyurethane (Swedish) finished floor, it will leave an oily residue on the floor surface which will make cleaning the floor not only difficult, but dangerous and could actually degrade the floor and cause problems when the floor is buffed and recoated.

When cleaning your hardwood floor, only a minimal amount of water should be used. So mop and wipe only with a dampened, not but not dripping wet cloth or mop. Dry the floor using a sh-mop or dry cotton towel to remove water and prevent water spotting.

The best way to clean any sort of wood floor finished with a urethane is to use vinegar or other polyurethane specific cleaner which can be purchased from a home improvement store

More Cleaning Tips

Always sweep or vacuum your hardwood floors to reduce scratching and pitting from the dirt and small rocks. This will prolong the shine and life of the wood finish by years.

Oil cleaners such as Murphy's oil soap are best used on the older type of wood, including an unwaxed and bare-wood floors. Waxed and polyurethane-finished floors (swedish finish) generally need only to be mopped with a non residue cleaner and water, or with water and vinegar. We use a solution of 1 cup of vinegar to 1 gallon of water which keeps wood floors clean and shining.

Don't Try This at Office

Never, ever, put an oil or furniture polish (pledge) on your wood floor to try to shine it. It will become dangerously slippery, and the oil or polish will be very difficult to remove

Murphy's oil soap mixed according to directions and mopped once a week works. If you keep the dirt of the floors, you will rarely t have to mop it. Remember to vacuum frequently, use mats at doorways, and your floor will thank you.