

## 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 protecting 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 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. Never wet mop a hardwood floor or leave spills unattended for long periods of time. Clean up spills before they turn into stains or otherwise damage the finish. For stubborn, sticky spills a damp mop 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 floors urethane finish coat is grit. Sand, dirt and fine particles (grit) will in time be tracked onto any floor surface by normal foot traffic from the exterior environment. When compressed under footwear, this 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 floors urethane coatings. To prevent this abrasive wearing from occurring, it is essential that this grit is removed from the hardwood floor surface when ever 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 a recommended for grit/dirt removal. The use of a canister 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**

DO: Dust mop, sweep, or suction vacuum consistently.

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

DON'T: Wet mop a hardwood floor- ever!

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 dust treatment unless it is approved for no-wax hardwood polyurethaned floors. The wrong treatment can make your floor dull and cause adhesion problems the next time you topcoat.

DON'T: Stick masking, blue painter's or any other type of tape onto the urethane surface.

### **Furniture**

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

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

DON'T: Slide or push furniture across your hardwood floor! Heavy couches, dressers and similar furniture can scratch, gouge, and compress the wood 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 roll out a refrigerator or move a piano with out placing down building paper and sheet wood (thin ¼" plywood, luan or paneling) in front of them. Their extreme weight upon their wheels will drastically compress the grain of the wood, leaving a heavy gouge like indentation. Instead the sheeting will absorb the weight and the paper will protect the floor.

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 shoes with soles 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 at the 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 or vinyl backing without checking to determine if they will affect your floor's finish. Some materials in the backing can react with certain floor finishes, 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 *resand* them. Preserve your investment by assuring that the finish on your floor is still doing its job. Over time, any hardwood urethane finish will eventually begin to wear. The key is to recognize this and have your floor recoated with an additional application, or "top coating", of urethane before it's too late. A quick visual indication of this requirement is when the high-traffic walkway areas have lost their sheen or gloss in comparison to the no-traffic far edges of the floor.

Try wiping the floor with a damp sponge. If scuffs disappear when damp, then a top coat will permanently hide any of these light scratches. If you still see gouge marks or embedded dirt you require sanding.

If you desire more than a visual indication, you can test this by going to a high-traffic area where the finish is likely to be most worn and pour a tablespoon or two of water onto the floor. Determine if the water:

- Beads so that you can wipe it up without a trace? Congratulations! Your floor's finish is doing its job!
- Soak into the wood after a few minutes, darkening the floor only slightly? Don't panic, your floor's finish is only partially worn. It may be time for a top coat.
- Immediately disappear into the wood leaving a dark spot?! If so your floor's finish is seriously worn and it's definitely time to topcoat or quite possibly a complete resanding and refinishing may be required.

If it is time for a top coating, this can be performed with a simple one day procedure by Inter-County Floor Sanding. A quick screening of the existing urethane will remove any light surface dirt and slightly burnish or scuff the floor, allowing a new coating to properly adhere to it. The procedure is the same as that which is performed

on the last day of the original sanding and refinishing process. (If your floor has ever been waxed this topcoat procedure CAN NOT be done – urethane does not adhere to wax!)

*Thank-you for using Inter-County Floor Sanding and we look forward to serving you in the future.  
Sincerely, Brian Stanfield ~ Owner / President - Inter-County Floor Sanding*