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TIMBER FLOOR - REFURBISHMENT

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The hardwood floors in the property take a beating. Between tenants turnover moved furniture, general wear and tear, and the presence of the general public.

Approaches to Refinishing Hardwood Floors Without Sanding

- Use a store-bought chemical abrasion kit
- Buff and recoat floors with polyurethane
- Use a revitalizer

Figure Out What Kind of Hardwood Floors You're Working With

it's important to know the materials you're working with. Different floor materials or treatments will have an impact on how you are able to refinish the floors, and you want to make sure we take the best and most effective approach.

Refinishing Prefinished and Laminated Hardwood Floors

Whether the floor are traditional hardwoods, prefinished wood, or laminated wood, restoring without sanding is a practical solution. Though you can sand traditional hardwoods, it's difficult or even impossible to sand prefinished or laminated wood floors. Why? Laminated floors (either glue-down or floating) only have a thin layer of attractive wood veneer over plywood, so you can't sand these floors more than twice without damaging them and exposing the plywood.

As for traditional hardwoods, forgoing the sanding method saves a lot of time, energy, and money

Dealing with Floors That Have Been Waxed

Unfortunately, if your floor has any kind of wax on it, the new finish won't bond. Even if the floor

is worn, wax will remain in areas that have low foot traffic. Find a spot that doesn't have a lot of wear, like a corner or behind a door, and drop some mineral spirits as a test. But what are mineral spirits? They're actually a petroleum-derived clear liquid.

After a few minutes, wipe the solution with a clean white rag. If the rag wipes clean, you're all set. But if any brown or shiny residue comes off, you have wax. Chances are if your floor's finish was applied before the 1970s (before polyurethane was used as a sealant), your floor is coated with wax, old-fashioned varnish, or shellac. If you do have wax, you still don't have to sand it down for a clean and shiny finish. Consider buffing on a fresh wax coat to get that shine, albeit temporary, as well as to continue protecting your floors from wear and tear.

However, wax isn't the only material to be wary of. Floors could have residue from other chemicals like furniture polish, glass cleaner, insecticide (from pest control professionals), wallpaper paste, paint, and other chemical cleaners that would prevent the adhesion for a new finish. Conduct a similar test with mineral spirits in a few other areas because you want to ensure the floor is in the best shape for adhesion before getting started.

When Full-On Sanding Is the Best Approach

Sometimes, going the sand-free method just isn't going to work. As previously mentioned, if the floors have a wax-finished floor or find other chemicals that would prevent a new finish from bonding, you'd want to sand all of that off and start fresh.

Does the floor have many deep scratches and dents that penetrate the finish as well as the wood? What about high-traffic areas where the finish is completely worn away or flaking off? The best bet is sanding so you can get the cleanest new finish. Though there's no harm in adding a new finish to floors with this amount of wear because it will protect the floor, a new coat may accentuate existing deep gouges and won't

look flawless. Also, using the chemical etching process (more to come on this below) on bare wood will stain it.

In the case of water damage or pet stains that have penetrated through the finish to the actual flooring, a new coat of finish will not hide (or remove) these spots. The optimal way to remove these unsightly stains is through sanding.

When in Doubt, Always Test Before You Do Anything

This is the most effective way to make sure the finishes you plan on using will stick to the floor. The last thing you want to do is go through any type of process just to have your new finish flake or not bond properly, leading to a larger expense, more time spent, and a bigger clean-up. Checking to see if there's anything going on with your floors that would prevent a new finish from working effectively. Tape off a small section and roughen up the floor with a sanding screen to test your refinishing materials. If it flakes by lightly scraping a coin against it or resembles a bumpy texture similar to an orange peel, sanding is the best route.

Use a Store-Bought Chemical Abrasion Kit

A few brands might name their product differently, but they have the same process. A chemical solution to prepare the flooring and etch the old finish so the new finish will bond. Then you'll apply a new coat of finish to restore the floor. It's best to follow the directions on the kit to ensure you're doing it effectively.

Materials and Pros and Cons

Materials:

- Hardwood floor cleaner, mop, broom, vacuum, cleaning wipes, damp cloth, etc.
- Painter's tape

- Chemical abrasion kit (comes with the abrasive pad, abrasive liquid, application block, finish application pad, and finish)
- 2 plastic garbage bags
- 2 shoeboxes
- 2 paint trays (if you don't have a garbage bags and shoeboxes)
- Scouring pads
- Broom handle
- Dishwashing liquid
- Shoe covers
- Wood stain
- Small artist paintbrush or cotton swab
- Paint pad or paint brush
- Rags
- Hairdryer

Pros:

- One kit has all the major materials for a one-stop shop
- Doesn't create any dust
- Minimal fumes

Cons:

- Requires more than one person to do the job effectively
- You only have a short amount of time to apply the finish before it starts to dry

#1: Clean and Clear the Room

Make sure the floor is clear of any furniture. If the tenant moved out, hopefully that's the case. Be sure to remove any partial furnishings or fixtures provide that would get in the way of the floor (e.g. floor-length curtains, built-in shelves, etc.). Even if the tenant left belongings behind, follow the proper procedure to clear the space of their things. Also, take the doors off the hinges. Cupboard and entry doors easily get in the way and prevent you from covering every spot on the floor evenly no matter how you move around them.

Also, clean the floor with a vacuum and damp cloth—no chemical cleaners. Ensure every surface in the room is clean from any dust and grime (window sills, blinds, curtains, and baseboards). You don't want tiny particles to land on the floor in the wet finish and create imperfections when the finish hardens. If there's gunk on the floor, use an abrasive sponge. Then let the floor dry after cleaning.

Prep the space by plugging any heating ducts or vents with old towels. Close windows and turn fans (or ventilation systems) off. Limit the spread of dust, which means stopping air flow. Use painter's tape to protect your baseboards. Also, close the curtains or blinds to prevent sunlight coming through—avoid creating hot spots on the floor that would cause the finish to dry faster than you'd want.

#2: Apply the Liquid Abrasive and Scrub the Floor

Take it one small section at a time (4 ft x 4 ft) and apply a fair amount of pressure to roughen the floor's surface. Scrub firmly over each section a few times to get the most effective results. It's important to go little by little because if the solution is left for longer than five minutes on the floor, it can seep into the cracks between the flooring strips and damage the core beneath the laminate. As you go, wipe up any extra liquid with an old towel before starting the next area. However, the floor should not be dry (a thin film of liquid is ideal), just free of puddles.

Though the chemical etching liquid is fairly low-odor, if you want some ventilation, open a window or turn on a fan on low in a different room.

#3: Clean the Floor Again

Mix two tablespoons of dishwashing liquid into a gallon of warm water. Dampen mop to clean the floor and neutralize the etcher and clean up any remaining residue. Make sure the mop is only lightly damp as not to cause any water damage to the floor. Mop in small sections and clean up puddles as they form.

Wear shoe covers to keep the floor clean and free of any dust or particles. Then wait another 30 minutes for the floor to dry.

#4: Touch Up Deeper Scratches

Use a tiny artist paintbrush or a cotton swab to apply some stain that matches the stain of the floor. Feather the stain out to make sure it blends in with the floor and then blot it with a rag. Dry the stain for a minute with a hair dryer and add a very thin coat of finish from the kit. Feather out the finish around the edges so there aren't ridges you can see or feel. Then dry the patch with the hairdryer again.

#5: Coat the Floor in New Finish

First, plan out how to apply the finish. Make sure all of you are wearing shoe covers.

Using a finish applicator pad on the block and pour some finish into another plastic-lined tray. This way you can get a good coating of finish on the applicator and in addition to minimizing drips. However, you don't want to squeeze out the excess—this will create bubbles.

As you spread the finish on the floor, give your helper a head start coating the edges against the walls and baseboards with a paint pad and/or brush while you follow behind with the applicator.



#6: Let the Finish Dry

Follow the directions on the finishing package for best results. However, after eight hours, you should be able to walk on the floor with clean socks. It's recommended to let the finish fully set for two weeks.

Buffing and Recoating with Polyurethane

This approach is similar to using the chemical abrasion kit, but instead of using a liquid to rough up the floors, you're using a buffer. Buffing is a little messier than using a chemical kit, and might look like sanding, but all you're doing is roughing up the existing finish so the new finish will bond. You're not fully sanding to entirely remove the finish and scratches; you're just roughing it through screening. This is still a shallow solution to repair surface scratches and marks.

Materials and Pros and Cons

Materials:

- Hardwood floor cleaner, mop, broom, vacuum, cleaning wipes, scouring pads, etc.
- Rented buffer
- Mineral spirits
- Wood stain
- Small artist paintbrush or cotton swab
- Sanding screens
- Hammer
- Putty
- Nails
- Box fan
- Plastic sheeting
- Duct tape
- Painter's tape

- Dust mask
- Polyurethane
- Paint brush or paint roller
- Plastic garbage bag
- Shoebox
- Paint tray (if you don't have a garbage bag and shoebox)
- Applicator pad
- Applicator block
- Broom handle

Pros:

- Most effective way to prep your floor for a new finish
- The most professional DIY approach
- Long-lasting

Cons:

- Requires a material rental
- Causes more dust and requires a more significant clean-up
- Requires more hands-on effort