

MAINTENANCE

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History.

Wooden floors have been used for centuries as both a structural and decorative element in buildings.

The maintenance regime is now much simpler thanks to modern materials, but also because of the way we live.

The earliest known form of maintenance was to spread sand across the floor, this abraded the soft parts of the grain and left the hard parts standing proud. It was not the most attractive surface, but it was relatively simple and gave a textured surface that was not slippery.

Later forms of maintenance included the use of animal fats and beeswax, which eventually led to the development of hard wax products and oil.

All of the earlier methods were problematic, with common problems being the smell generated through the use of animal fats, sticky surfaces (which were impossible to clean) with waxed floors and all of them were labour intensive.

Lacquered surfaces arrived in the 50's and rapidly developed as the preferred choice as they gave an attractive finish and required substantially less labour to keep them clean and fresh.

In the mid 90's oil emerged as the fashionable choice as it offered a more natural alternative to lacquers, whilst providing a matt finish. By the end of the 90's the lacquer manufacturers had developed matt lacquers and this is once again impacting on traditional oiled finishes.

Cleaning

For all floors the following simple rules apply and they should be regarded as the most important aspects of maintaining a wooden floor.

Prevention is better than cure! Specify an entrance mat zone.

This should preferably be 3 stage with a scraper system at all entrances to the building, followed by 2 zones of non directional absorbent material.

Dry cleaning methods are best!

The floor should be vacuum cleaned regularly (frequency depends on the level of traffic) or swept to remove loose particles of grit. These act as an abrasive on the surface of the floor and can quickly erode the surface finish leaving the wood exposed.

Wet cleaning methods

When wet cleaning is necessary use a damp cloth or fibre mop in conjunction with a fine spray bottle. Always follow the instructions on how to dilute the cleaner before use. Never use any cleaning products that do not have a neutral ph.

A string mop should be avoided as too much water will be used, which can cause movement in the floor and staining. Important: Make sure that any liquid dries within 1 minute of being applied.



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Additional maintenance

Laquered floors

Protect the surface and sanding becomes a thing of the past!

Modern lacquers are extremely durable and rarely erode to the point where wood fibres are exposed but this does not mean that the appearance of the finish will not deteriorate.

Microscopic scratches on the surface of the floor can look unsightly and dressings are available to further protect the surface of the floor. Suitability depends upon the level of use the floor receives but as a general rule the following would apply

On lacquered floors in residential environments dressings are a practical way to maintain a uniform sheen.

In commercial environments it may be more appropriate to lightly abrade the surface on a periodic basis (in line with traffic levels) prior to overcoating with a new application of lacquer.

For specific information and assistance regarding maintenance programs for lacquered floors in commercial environments, please contact our specification team on 01772 694902



Golden Rules

Specify good mat zones

Dry clean often

Use wet cleaning methods sparingly

When using dressings or oil match the application to the level of traffic the floor receives

Oiled floors

Do not over apply maintenance oil, monitor the surface and develop a routine to suit the traffic the floor receives!

Floors that are treated with oil perform very well in high traffic areas, minor damage is easy to repair and the natural patina that is a characteristic of an oiled floor is very attractive and highlights the natural beauty of the wood.

One thing is certain, get the maintenance regime right and an oiled floor will provide a durable surface that compliments the wood but get it wrong and it can appear to be dirty and sticky.

Most oils contain a selection of ingredients, which often include wax, which is suspended in oil (often linseed oil) The oil and wax is partially absorbed into the surface (the amount of absorption depends upon the species being used) and any surplus material should be removed before the floor can be buffed. In some cases there is not a requirement to buff the floor follow the application instructions for the product you intend to use for specific information on application.

If oil is added too frequently it will not dry to form a dirt resistant crust on the surface of the floor and the surface will quickly become dirty and difficult to clean.

How do you get the balance right?

Apply a coat of maintenance oil immediately after the floor is installed unless the flooring manufacturer dictates otherwise. Use dry cleaning methods and restrict the use of liquid based cleaning methods as much as possible. (Wet cleaning methods impact upon the dirt resistant crust and should be used sparingly)

Monitor the surface and only consider a new application of maintenance oil when the surface of the floor becomes more difficult to clean

In commercial environments the method of spray buff maintenance works very well, but the frequency also depends upon traffic levels. With oiled surfaces there will be an element of trial and error in the early stages, until the maintenance regime can accurately reflect the level of traffic the floor receives.