

Tried & True

Floor Finishing

Background:

Most floor finishes consist of polyurethane or catalyzed varnish materials also known as barrier or film-forming finishes. These types of products present a hardened, water-proof, and abrasion proof surface on the floor. In commercial or high traffic areas these finishes work well. However they also have plenty of limitations. Appearance is the first. These products leave a film which obscures the color and texture of the wood. Additionally, as wear patterns develop a haze of scratching can usually be seen in the worn area. Lastly, barrier finishes are more challenging in regards to long-term maintenance. In order to return a floor finished with polyurethane or catalyzed varnish to its original state you must strip the old finish off completely and then refinish the whole floor. Would you rather have to refinish your entire floor every 5-7 years or only need to touch it up from time to time?

Oil Polishing:

On both hardwood and softwood floors oil polishing creates a beautiful surface which preserves all the natural color and texture of the wood. The surface is water resistant and washable. If areas show the wear of a high traffic pattern the area can be easily touched up and blended into the existing finish without stripping or sanding the whole floor.

Process:

Sand:

Sanding the surface for oil polishing is more critical than sanding for barrier finishes. Barrier finishes will fill the scratches formed by inadequate sanding. Sanding before applying Tried & True oils will act as a magnifier. While this quality is advantage in the beauty of the finished floor, it also necessitates careful preparation of the bare wood. Inadequate or uneven sand will result in dull spots on the finished floor. 180 grit or better is recommended for finish sanding. Careful preparation, including sanding the surface with the finest grit possible will make the finishing process easier and will give a better looking, more durable result.

Grain Filling:

You may choose to use a grain filler on your floor. This is particularly recommended on open grained woods such as oak, ash, and walnut. It is also an advantage on close-grained woods. Grain filling increases the water resistance of the surface, adds some abrasion resistance, and makes the application of the oil finish easier. Do not use paste grain fillers which contain mineral spirits or citrus based solvents. They will slow down or stop the curing of the oil finish. See separate instructions for grain filling.

We recommend using shellac as a pore filler. Use either commercially available products (amber or white) mixed 1:1 with shellac thinner (denatured alcohol) or dry shellac flakes mixed in a 1 1/2 lb. cut (1 1/2 lb. shellac flake to each 1 gallon of thinner). Finish sand the floor to desired surface. Apply 1 - 2 coats of shellac (open grained wood will need 2 coats).

Using the same grit paper as you used as final sanding on the bare wood, sand the surface of the floor so that the shellac remains in the pores but the wood fiber between the pores is bare.

Now the floor is ready to prime with Tried & True Danish Oil.

Prime:

Remove all dust left from sanding and/or grain filling. It is recommended, but not necessary to burnish the raw wood. Burnishing the raw wood bends the sanded fibers of wood over making a smoother, brighter surface. Burnishing may be done by hand using 0000 steel wool (or its synthetic counterpart). You can use a hand help polisher with a similar bonnet. If using a commercial sander, screen the floor with either a purple or white pad. Remove all dust left behind by burnishing. Apply a very thin coat of Tried & True Danish Oil to the raw wood according to the instructions on the can.

To finish, apply Tried & True Varnish Oil as a top-coat. The first coat of Varnish Oil may be applied over the Danish Oil on the same day, but it is better to wait 24 hours. Apply a very thin coating of Varnish Oil according to the instructions on the can. We recommend 2 or 3 applications of Varnish Oil. Allow at least 24 hours between coats. The longer you wait between coats the better the finish will be. The harder the under-coat is allowed to become, the better the final surface will be. This is most effective between the first and second coat of Varnish Oil.

Buff:

Allow at least 24 hours after the final coat of Varnish Oil. Buff the surface to bring up the final sheen. If you are buffing by hand, use a lambs' wool mitt or 0000 steel wool. Buffing with a hand-held rotary buffer (generally known as an "automotive buffer" use a cotton-wool or flannel bonnet, not a lamb's wool bonnet as they are too flimsy for the job). If you are using a commercial buffer, a white pad or standard polishing bonnet will work well. Remember Tried & True Wood Finishes get harder with age. If possible avoid placing area rugs for a week after finishing.

Maintenance:

Tried & True Oils get harder and more durable with age. Buff occasionally with a soft cloth or power buffer.

If the floor needs to be washed use Murphy's Oil Soap according to the manufacturer's instructions. Make sure the floor is completely dry after washing.

Wear spots or traffic patterns can be refinished after the area is thoroughly clean and has been buffed with steel wool (or a similar synthetic product) Use "0" followed by "000" steel wool. Finish as per the standard instructions on all Tried & True Wood Finishes. Unless the wear pattern is severe, grain filling is not necessary when refinishing.