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Care Tips: Hardwood Floors

Hardwood floors offer elegance, sophistication, and are able to stand the test of time. When maintained properly, they will serve proudly for years, often 50-100+ years or more.

Proper Cleaning and Care

Homeowners often find proper wood floor cleaning confusing because many off-the-shelf products and infomercials can be misleading, ultimately causing damage or leaving residue. We also frequently address issues stemming from overuse of “shine rejuvenating” products that create buildup, soil the surface, and result in a cloudy finish. Moreover, regular steam use can compromise floor finishes.

Fortunately, most wood floors can be kept looking beautiful with minimal effort. In many cases, a small amount of preventive care is all that’s needed to preserve—and even enhance—the natural patina that develops over the years.

- **Wipe up all spills immediately.** Spills left untreated can result in permanent staining or surface damage.
- **Upright vacuums are discouraged.** Set vacuum for hard-surfaces. Turn off the beater-bars / brushes if possible. Wands, disk “vacs” or attachments should be felted or have soft bristled wand glides.
- **DO NOT wet-mop a wood floor.** Standing water will result in cracks, splits, cupping, warping, degradation of the finish, and leave a discoloring residue.
- **DO NOT use steam cleaners.** Water in a vapor form will penetrate the wood fibers and cause irreversible damage to the wood flooring and the finish.
- **Avoid using heavy additives and scented cleaners.** “Fabulously” loved cleaners cause residue build-up.
- **Avoid using ammonia.** It will chemically react with the wood causing discoloration, deterioration of the finish and take years of life off your hardwood floors.
- **Avoid wax and oil-based soaps overspray from furniture polish.** They can damage the wood and will leave sticky residues that will spread and transfer to carpets causing discoloration, leaving ugly brown traffic lanes.
- **Avoid dust treated cloths / mop strips.** The pre-treated chemicals used can make the floors slippery. They are a huge cause of trips and falls, and should be avoided.
- **Use breathable throw rugs.** Use them both inside and outside doorways to prevent grit, salt, chemicals, sand, moisture, and other debris from being tracked onto the floors. In kitchens, place a breathable area rug in front of the kitchen sink and stove.

- **Remove wet rugs.** Don't leave overly wet rugs on the floor. They should be thoroughly dried before returning them to the floor. Wet rugs can damage wood fairly easily.
- **Be careful when placing area rugs on new or newly refinished floors.** Check the finish manufacturer's recommendations for when it is safe to place rugs on the floor. The finish needs to cure completely first.
- **Beware of using synthetic non-skid pads.** They may imprint their patterns into the finish, or decompose, resulting in the rubber sticking to the floor.
- **Be aware when using area rugs.** UV/sun exposure directly on wood floors will result in fading. Areas protected by the rugs will be unaffected by the exposure, creating areas with different colors.
- **Use floor protectors under the legs of furniture.** This will help prevent scuffing and scratching. Inspect and replace the protectors when soiled or damaged.
- **Avoid walking with cleats, sports shoes, and high heels.** A 125-pound woman in high heels forces 2,000 lbs per sq. inch impact on the floor, greater than a grown elephant standing on the floor!
- **Keep pet claws trimmed and in good repair.** No matter the size of the pet, their claws are sharp and can leave scratches. Big pets can leave deep scratches, smaller ones can leave smaller, squirrely scratches.
- **Be careful when moving heavy items.** Use felted movers, dollies, or handtrucks with clean, soft wheels. Do not slide heavy items on wood flooring. Instead, pick up the furniture and set in place to avoid scratching the floors.
- **Heed extreme caution when moving appliances.** When moving refrigerators, stoves, etc., use safety glides or reinforced floor protection like Ramboard™, and/or plywood placed on a blanket, moving in short spurts.
- **Use humidifiers and dehumidifiers.** Throughout the winter/dry months use a humidifier and a dehumidifier in the summer/humid months to keep wood movement and shrinkage to a minimum. It's crucial to maintain a consistent environment throughout the year to minimize floor movement.
- **Refinish when needed.** When the floor loses its luster, becomes scratched or damaged, it's time for refinishing!

Adopting these care practices will help assure your hardwood's lasting beauty!