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Floor Finishing

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Floor Finishing

TREATMENT FOR OLD WOOD FLOORS

Make floor as tight, level and smooth as possible

1. Plane or sandpaper to make smooth.
2. Remove tacks; sink nails below the surface.

Scrub clean with hot soapsuds or washing soda; rinse well with clear water.

Remove stains

1. **Paint:** with turpentine, lye water, or scrape.
2. **Ink and dark spots:** use 1 tsp. oxalic acid (poison) dissolved in 1 cup of hot water. Brush this bleaching solution on the wood and allow to stand several hours, or overnight. Repeat if necessary. Wash off all traces of acid with clear water. Let wood dry thoroughly.

Remove badly worn varnish or paint by one of the following methods—

1. Planing machine.
2. Scraping with sharp tool.
3. Prepared paint or varnish remover.
4. Lye solution or lye paste (least expensive).

Lye Solution: 1 lb. lye dissolved in 6 qts. cold water. Apply to floor with old broom cut with straight edge. (Protect feet with rubber shoes and hands with rubber gloves.) Let stand a few minutes until finish softens, then scrape off. Work with only 3 or 4 sq. ft. at a time. Wash off at least twice making last rinse water strong with vinegar. When floor is thoroughly dry, sandpaper. Proceed as with new floor.

Lye Paste: Add about 3 tbsp. lye to 1 qt. of ordinary starch prepared as for laundry purposes. Use same as solution.

Fill cracks and holes with crack filler

Homemade Crack Filler No. 1.—Melt cabinet or flake glue in a little water in a double boiler. Thicken with fine sawdust and color to match the wood. Use while hot, working it smoothly into cracks with a small knife.

Homemade Crack Filler No. 2.—Dissolve 1 oz. flake glue in 2 cups boiling water. Stir in bits of newspaper until the mixture becomes as thick as putty. While mixture is still hot put in cracks with a putty knife. This filler may be stained to match the wood.

Homemade Crack Filler No. 3.—Mix $\frac{1}{2}$ pt. turpentine and $1\frac{1}{2}$ pts. linseed oil (preferably boiled). Stir into this enough whiting to make a thick paste, not quite as thick as putty. If used on oak floor, should be stained to match flooring by adding a little yellow ochre and a small amount of burnt umber.

Cracks should be filled and allowed to dry before any wood filler or other material is used. Proceed with the finishing process as for new floors, by any of the methods described.

FLOOR FINISHES

The floor finishes in use today include linseed oil, stain, filler, shellac, varnish, paint, enamel, lacquer and wax. The finish selected for a particular floor will depend upon the use of the room, kind of wood in floor, condition of flooring, the effect desired, and the money available for the finishing. Various ones of the above materials, or combinations of them, give pleasing and satisfactory results when properly applied. The floor must always be as tight, level, smooth, clean and dry as possible before any finish is applied.

Stains

Either water or oil stains may be used on floors to bring out grain of the wood, or to make them harmonize with other woodwork or furnishings. Either kind can be bought ready mixed, or simple ones made at home.

Water stains should be brushed on dampened floor, carefully, without overlapping brush strokes, and wiped off at once with a soft cloth. Oil stains should be wiped off after being allowed to set a few minutes. Stained floors should dry at least 24 hours before they are ready for filler, shellac, wax, or varnish.

Homemade Floor Stain No. 1.—1 oz. permanganate of potash and 1 qt. warm water. This solution will give a good brown on pine flooring.

Homemade Floor Stain No. 2.—Pour enough water over half green walnuts to cover them well. Boil until stain is extracted from hulls. Strain and to one quart of stain add about 10 cents worth of permanganate of potash. Bottle and keep until needed. Good on oak floor.

Homemade Floor Stain No. 3.—Chestnut oak brown. Boil the inner bark of the chestnut oak in water until stain is extracted. Strain, bottle. Use only enough water to cover bark.

Wood Filler

Oak, ash and other porous woods take a smoother and more durable finish if a good paste wood filler is rubbed into them before shellac, wax, or varnish is applied. Good fillers may be bought ready mixed or made at home.

Apply filler generously with stiff brush following grain of wood. Let stand 15 or 20 minutes and then rub in with cotton waste or burlap, rubbing crosswise of the grain. Let dry from 24 hours to several days, then rub smooth with fine sandpaper. Ordinary oak takes about 5 lbs. of filler to 250 sq. ft. of floor.

Homemade Wood Filler.—1 lb. Spanish whiting, 1 lb. cooking starch, 1 qt. linseed oil. Mix well and apply as above.

Shellac

Shellac is frequently used as a protective finish on floors which do not get very hard wear. When shellac is used anywhere, it should be much thinned with denatured alcohol. Use about equal parts of shellac and alcohol. From two to several thin coats give a better surface than one or two unthinned coats. The hard shine of a shellacked finish may be softened by rubbing down with fine steel wool, or pumice and linseed oil.

Wax is usually used to polish and protect a shellacked surface, or a good oil polish may be used.

Varnish

Varnish gives a hard, smooth, glossy finish which is easily applied and kept clean. It is most commonly used for softwood floors.

Use only the best varnish you can buy. Apply over floor which has been stained or filled, or both. Varnish will spread smoother if the can is warmed by standing in a pan of hot water about 20 minutes. The temperature of the room should be 70 degrees or higher. Do not varnish in rainy weather. Allow each coat to dry not less than 24 hours. Two coats of varnish are recommended for most floors.

A dull finish which many like is obtained by rubbing the final coat of varnish with pumice stone and water, or rottenstone and linseed oil. Remove all oil by wiping with clean, dry cloth. Wash pumice stone off with clear water and wipe dry.

Wax

Wax may be applied to a floor that has been filled, stained, shellacked, varnished or painted. Wax is considered the most attractive and practical finish for hardwood floors, which are usually paste filled and in many cases also surfaced with shellac before being waxed. The paste fills up the pores and the shellac gives a hard foundation for the wax and prevents grease from penetrating and staining the wood. Wax gives a soft finish to pine floors which have been stained or treated with boiled linseed oil.

The secret of successful waxing lies in applying thin coats of wax and rubbing a great deal. Wax should be rubbed on with a soft cloth or brush and allowed to harden several hours, or over night; then polish lengthwise of the grain with a heavy block wrapped in woolen cloth or old carpet, or with a weighted brush. One or two more coats may then be applied and rubbed down in the same way, giving a better and more lasting finish.

Wax may be bought ready mixed or made at home. One lb. will coat about 250 sq. ft.

Homemade Floor Wax No. 1.— $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. beeswax and $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. paraffin or parawax. Place in a quart jar and set in a pan of hot water and place on stove until melted. Remove from stove, add as much turpentine as the jar will hold. Stir for several minutes, then set aside to cool.

Homemade Floor Wax No. 2.— $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. beeswax, 1 lb. paraffin, $\frac{1}{4}$ pt. raw linseed oil, $1\frac{1}{2}$ pt. turpentine. Melt beeswax and paraffin, add linseed oil and turpentine, and stir mixture vigorously. Unfinished wood will be darkened somewhat by this wax as a result of the absorption of the linseed oil.

Oil Finish

Boiled linseed oil gives a protective and economical finish for many floors. It is serviceable for kitchen, bathroom, pantry, and porch floors. When properly applied and cared for it is very satisfactory. The usual mistake is to apply too much oil and to fail to wipe off the excess. A mixture of equal parts of linseed oil and turpentine is recommended for pine floors.

The floor should be perfectly clean and dry. Brush on oil, preferably hot, lengthwise of the grain of the wood and rub in with woolen cloth; remove excess oil. When dry, floor may be polished with brush covered with clean woolen cloth. The oiled floor may be waxed for better appearance and added durability, where such treatment is suitable.

Painting

Special floor paints, enamels or lacquers should be used. Two or three coats should be applied when floor is clean, dry, and free from dust.

Paint is used on soft woods. Its wearing qualities may be improved by finishing the last coat with a coat of wax, by rubbing well with equal parts of linseed oil and turpentine, or by adding a coat of clear spar varnish.

THE CARE OF FINISHED FLOORS

The floor which has been given a good finish of any kind will retain its good appearance much longer if given proper care. The use given the floor will determine the amount and kind of daily and weekly cleaning it will need.

General Care for an oiled, varnished, or painted floor: Brush with a soft-bristled, long-handled brush and dust with a clean dry, or slightly oiled mop. On waxed floor use clean, dry mop. Brushes and mops should be cleaned frequently.

Varnished or Shellacked Floors.—Occasionally rub well with an oil polish used sparingly. **Two home-made polishes are—**

1. One part linseed oil, three parts turpentine.
2. Two parts linseed oil, one part turpentine, one part vinegar.

If the floor is very soiled, clean with a cloth or mop wrung out of warm, soapy water. Wipe dry at once. Polish with oiled cloth or mop, or by applying wax.

Renew finish annually, or often enough to prevent wearing through surface to the bare wood.

Waxed Floors.—**Caution:** Never use oil on a waxed floor.

Clean soiled floor by rubbing with cloth wrung out of turpentine, gasoline or kerosene. **Caution:** Use proper precautions with inflammable substances.

Before rewaxing, clean floor with turpentine, gasoline or kerosene; rewax two or three times a year.

Touch up waxed floors occasionally where heaviest travel comes.

Oiled Floors.—When soiled, clean with soap and warm water. When floor is dry, polish with cloth or mop moistened with floor oil. If washed very often, re-oiling will be necessary at least once every six months.

Painted Floors may be wiped with wet cloth, let dry, then rubbed with oiled cloth or mop. Very soiled floors may be washed with warm soapy water, rinsed, dried and polished. Avoid using strong soaps or alkali, or allowing water to stand on floor. If painted floor is waxed, follow directions for waxed floors.

REMEMBER!

The care of the well finished floor is less laborious than of the unfinished one.

The use of mats at outside doors lessens tracking in grit to wear away floor finishes.

“Domes of silence” on lighter chairs and ball bearing casters on heavy furniture help preserve the floor finish.

For fuller treatment of this subject see Farmers’ Bulletin 1219, “Floors and Floor Coverings.”