

# **MODERN**

## **FLOOR CARE**

### **WAXES AND MAINTENANCE**

# Modern Floor Care—

## FLOOR WAXES AND MAINTENANCE

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*Extension Home Management Specialist*

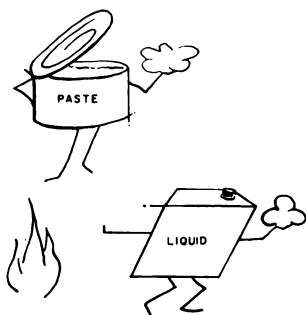
Floor care need not be a problem for the modern homemaker. With the equipment and waxes available today, the homemaker can do the job quickly and efficiently. A waxed floor stays clean longer because dirt doesn't stick to it.

When a film of wax is on the floor, the dirt embeds itself in that, not in the flooring. The dirt is removed as the wax is removed. Without the wax, dirt ground into the flooring would require frequent and harsh cleaning. Thus, the wax takes the wear, protecting the floor and eliminating expensive refinishing or replacement.

“What is the best kind of wax to use on my floors?” No brief or universal answer can be given to this question. There are two basic types of floor waxes — waxes that must be polished and self-polishing waxes.

Each homemaker must decide which type of wax is best for her floors and which she wants to use, considering effectiveness and convenience. Knowing some of the characteristics of the two basic types of floor waxes will help in making a choice.

**Polishing waxes.** Waxes that must be polished are usually referred to as polishing waxes. They contain a naphtha-like solvent which keeps them soft in the containers, making them easy to spread on floors. Both paste and liquid forms are available and must be rubbed or buffed to a shine. This is real work unless the homemaker owns an electric floor polisher or a floor polishing attachment for the vacuum cleaner. The liquid form, somewhat more expensive than the paste, is easier to apply. Since it contains more solvent, it is recommended for cleaning lightly soiled wood floors. It cleans dur-



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ing application by softening the dry wax already on the floor. This characteristic is an advantage in helping to blend the old wax with the new. Liquid polishing wax is usually a combustible mixture — *do not use near fire or flame.*

Except for very few kinds of floor coverings, including asphalt tile and rubber tile, a polishing wax, either paste or liquid, is recommended for beauty and lasting protection. Polishing wax should not be used on flooring composed of asphalt or rubber, because the solvent in this type of wax causes them to deteriorate. Do not use it on asphalt tile or on rubber tile unless the manufacturer states otherwise.

**Self-polishing waxes.** Self-polishing waxes, sometimes called water-emulsion waxes, were originally made for women who did not have an electric polisher and who wanted to avoid the hard work of polishing floors manually. A self-polishing wax contains finely divided particles of solid wax. When the liquid dries, the particles form a clean, smooth, transparent film which reflects light, producing the shine. After the wax dries, a higher gloss can be obtained by rubbing or buffing. Some self-polishing floor waxes contain a high shellac content and are claimed to give a high gloss and a hard film. Traffic lanes or other areas where the wax wears off fast can be touched up as needed. However, piling one coat on top of another tends to give an unwanted color to the surface, and too many coats are difficult to remove.



**Characteristics of a good floor wax.** Among the important properties of a good floor wax are good general appearance and good traffic performance. Wax with a good general appearance is light colored with a high and even gloss. Good traffic performance includes high resistance to soiling, scuffing, and general traffic wear. Other desirable properties are anti-slipperiness, water resistance, and easy maintenance.

The homemaker's satisfaction with a wax depends on how well the wax resists dirt, rubber heel marks, and loss of gloss. Most polishing waxes show little difference in performance; but there are differences among the self-polishing waxes in ability to provide freedom from scuffing and rubber heel markings, and resistance to

water and accumulation of soil. A film that has good durability assures less assimilation of surface dirt, less labor, lower cost of maintenance, and better protection of the flooring material.

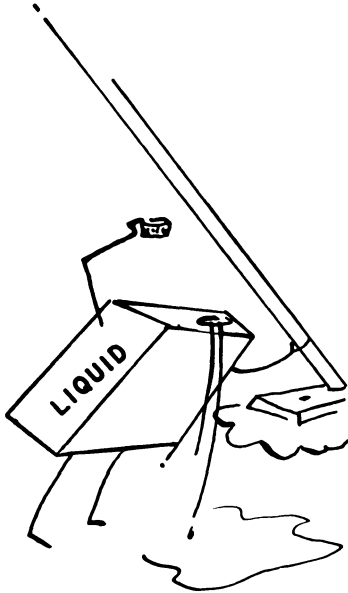
Anti-slip properties are important as a matter of safety. A wax film should not be slippery, yet it should be smooth to walk on and not tacky or sticky.

A wax should be somewhat water resistant so that it is not removed too easily by occasional damp moppings and by the traffic from wet or damp shoes. The waxed surfaces should retain a smooth appearance for a long time.

### MAINTAINING NEW-LOOKING FLOORS

No flooring will keep its good appearance without proper care and maintenance. According to authorities, more floors are ruined by improper care than are ever worn out. No matter which type of floor covering is used, it is important to begin proper maintenance when it is new. Do not wait until the surface begins to show wear.

All hard surface floors *without exception* benefit from regular wax care. All are easier to keep clean if waxed. If you don't use wax, your floors will not have that "well-groomed" appearance and maintenance will be a problem. When the floor begins to look dull, it is a sign that the wax has worn away and it is time to re-wax.



#### How to use liquid polishing waxes.

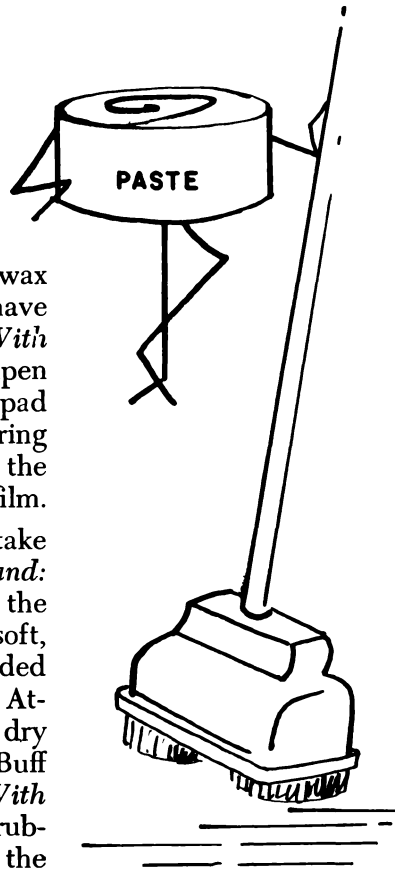
In preparing the floor before waxing, sweep or vacuum to pick up loose dirt. Unless the floor is heavily soiled or wax has accumulated, it is not necessary to use a floor cleaner before applying the wax. The solvent in the liquid polishing wax softens the old wax on the floor. The old wax will blend with the new. Then during polishing, the wax will be distributed to prevent an accumulation of too much wax.

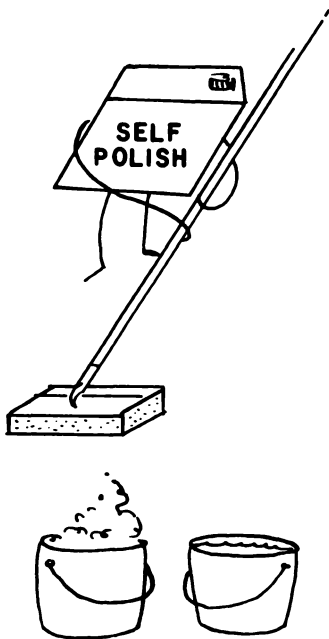
The wax should be thoroughly mixed by shaking the can. If wax has been stored in a cold area, it may have thickened. If so, warm can by standing it in hot water (not over an open flame). Then shake can vigorously.

Pour a small pool of wax on the floor and with a long-handled wax applicator rub in to loosen dirt, which will be picked up by the applicator pad. If floor is slightly dirty, place a clean dry cloth under applicator pad to pick up excessive dirt, adding more wax as needed. When the cloth becomes soiled, discard it and use another clean cloth. Rub very stubborn stains with *fine* steelwool dipped in the polishing wax. Be careful not to remove the finish on wood floors. If floor is heavily soiled, clean floor with commercial floor cleaner with a solvent base (see Page 8). When dry, apply wax. You can apply the wax by hand, but it is much easier to use the wax applicator.

**How to use paste wax.** Remove all loose dirt by sweeping or vacuuming. Clean floor with a commercial floor cleaner which has a solvent base. After floor is clean and dry, apply paste wax. *By hand:* Fold a soft damp cloth into a pad. Wipe across the wax in the can — don't dig it out in chunks. Spread wax very thin; it will be easier to polish and will give a harder, more durable finish. (You can put the wax on one side of the cloth fold and let wax come through. Then you do not have lumps deposited on the floor.) *With a long-handled wax applicator:* Dampen the pad with water. Put wax on pad with a spatula or knife, as if buttering a slice of bread. Be sure to spread the wax on the floor in a thin even film.

Both liquid and paste wax take the same polishing methods. *By hand:* Wait only a moment or two for the wax to set, then rub with a soft, clean cloth. Less buffing is needed when wax is moist. *With applicator:* Attach a clean pad or put a soft dry cloth on the floor under applicator. Buff while wax is moist to save effort. *With electric polisher:* The work of rubbing is done automatically, so let the wax dry before polishing (usually dries in 20 to 30 minutes).





### How to use self-polishing waxes.

Before a new application of self-polishing wax is put on the floor, the old dull coating should be removed completely from the entire floor. Clean the floor thoroughly with warm water, using as little as possible, and a mild soap or synthetic detergent (the detergent that is recommended for washing dishes).

Rinse thoroughly with clear water. Cleaning solutions are alkaline and if not completely removed, they will make any self-polishing wax smeary and more likely to water-spot. Let floor dry completely, then apply wax.

Do not shake container of self-polishing wax, as this makes the wax foamy and it will not dry in an even film. Pour a pool of wax on the floor. Apply the wax with a long-handled chenille or lamb's wool applicator, slightly dampened. Push the applicator pad through the pool of wax and

spread with light strokes, and as few strokes as possible. Don't pull pad toward you — you will get a more even application if you start each stroke forward. Never rub in self-polishing wax or apply with scrubbing motion. The wax begins to dry as soon as it is on the floor; disturbing the film as it is drying ruins the gloss. Allow approximately 20 to 30 minutes for drying. The time will vary with temperatures and humidity. You can apply self-polishing wax by hand, following the same procedure as when using an applicator, but it is easier to do with an applicator.

If you have old, porous floors, such as worn linoleum, a second coat of self-polishing wax is recommended. Allow at least 4 hours between applications. Do not walk on floors between applications.

**How often a floor should be waxed.** It is difficult to say how often a floor should be waxed. The frequency of waxing depends on the size of the family, the amount of dirt tracked in, and other conditions.

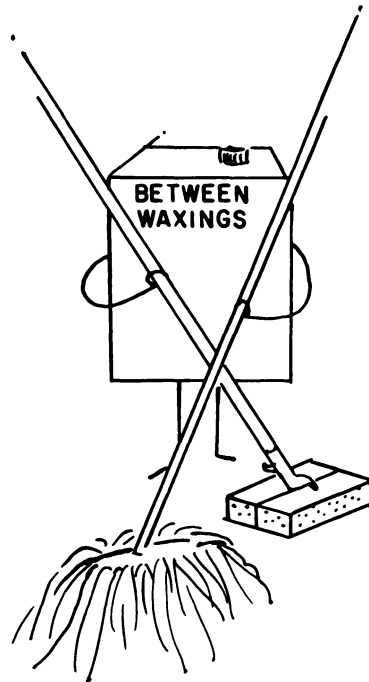
When dirt sticks and the floor looks dull and cannot be buffed

to a shine, you know that the wax has been worn away. Then the floor has no protection and should be re-waxed immediately before it is too damaged by traffic.

**Care between waxings.** Daily dusting with a dry mop makes floor wax last longer, because damaging grit is removed. If dust is difficult to pick up, use your vacuum cleaner. *Never* use an oiled mop or chemically treated mop because oil softens wax and dulls the shine.

Wipe up spills as they occur. Use a paper towel or sponge, and soak up the liquids rather than rub them up. Then buff the area with a dry paper towel to bring back the gloss.

When you damp-mop to remove dirty tracks between scrubbing and applications of self-polishing waxes, dip mop in clear cool water and wring out. Have it wet enough to slide easily across the wax. Don't bear down or use a scrubbing motion. Then let the floor dry without wiping.



### TYPES OF WAX TO USE ON DIFFERENT FLOORS

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Linoleum       | Self-polishing or polishing wax may be used. On kitchen floors of all kinds, self-polishing wax is usually preferred. It can be buffed time and again between waxings and removed easily by using warm water and a mild detergent. |
| Vinyl          | Vinyl is exceptionally resistant to stains and wear, but either self-polishing or polishing wax lessens scratches and makes floors easier to clean.  |
| Vinyl-Asbestos | This type of hard surface floor needs waxing just as vinyl floors and for the same reasons. Use self-polishing or polishing wax.   |
| Asphalt Tile   | Self-polishing wax <i>only</i> should be used on asphalt tile. The solvents in most polishing waxes soften asphalt tile and will also cause it to bleed.   |

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Rubber Tile             | Some rubber tile is affected by polishing wax. Apply <i>only</i> self-polishing wax to rubber tile floors, unless the manufacturer directs otherwise.   |
| Cork Tile               | Liquid polishing wax is the best protective treatment for sealed cork tile. It is effective in removing soil and depositing wax. Vinyl cork tile can be waxed with polishing or self-polishing wax.   |
| Ceramic Tile            | Glazed ceramic tile floors are seldom a problem, but old discolored tiles look cleaner after they're scrubbed with a polisher-scrubber. Ceramic tile rarely warrants waxing of any kind.  |
| Concrete                | Sealed concrete floors can be waxed with self-polishing or polishing wax for easier upkeep.   |
| Terrazzo and Marble     | Even though these floors are well sealed, they are subject to staining unless protected with wax, either self-polishing or polishing. If preferred, a "sealer-type" product which contains polishing waxes, resin, and a slip-retardent finish may be used.   |
| Slate, Brick, Flagstone | The types which are sealed or glazed should be protected against wear by the use of the sealer-type product described above or by wax, self-polishing or polishing.   |
| Wood                    | Polishing wax is recommended for waxing wood, because it removes dirt as the wax is applied. On <i>worn</i> wood floors, only the paste wax that requires polishing is recommended. If wood floors are well sealed and the finish is not worn in heavy traffic areas, self-polishing wax may be used. |

## FLOOR CLEANERS—COMMERCIAL AND HOME PREPARATIONS

**To remove accumulated polishing waxes.** A commercial floor cleaner in a solvent base is recommended for heavily soiled floors. These cleaners usually contain some wax which helps to maintain the wax finish of the floor. Follow instructions given on the container. For a complete wax job, additional wax coats are needed. If the floor is only lightly soiled, the liquid polishing wax will clean sufficiently. Instructions for using the liquid polishing wax are given on page 4, under "How To Use Liquid Polishing Waxes."

**To remove accumulated self-polishing waxes.** There are on the market commercial wax removers that are mixed with hot water, to be used on hard floor coverings such as printed or inlaid linoleum,



rubber tile, asphalt tile, vinyl plastic, sealed cork, terrazzo, marble, ceramic tile, concrete, brick, slate, and flagstone. They are not recommended for wood floors, as water raises the grain of the wood on unfinished or worn floors. Then, too, the hot cleaning solution may soften and remove shellac or may stain or damage some floor varnishes. The commercial wax remover is recommended for removing accumulated wax, dirt, oil, etc. In order to prevent an accumulation of wax, use a remover about twice a year. When working close to another room which has wood floors or carpets, dam up the doorway with a large cloth so the cleaning solution can't spread into the next room. Be sure to rinse the floor carefully before putting on new wax.

A solution of mild soap or mild detergent and household ammonia is often just as effective as the commercial wax removers, and is less expensive. If you have soft water, you can use the following formula:

1½ cups mild soap  
6 tablespoons household ammonia  
1 gallon warm water

If you have hard water use:

1 cup mild synthetic detergent  
6 tablespoons household ammonia  
1 gallon warm water

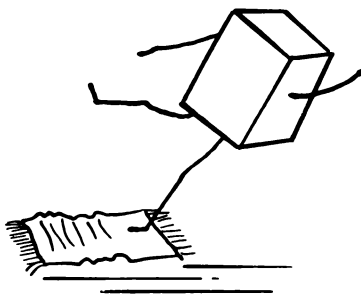
### QUESTIONS?? PROBLEMS!!

Here's an answer for:

#### (1) *Slipperiness*

In an attempt to lessen the slipperiness of the dry film, some manufacturers add a small amount of resin. Perhaps the consumer's own best safeguard against dangers of undue slipperiness is to apply the wax — both polishing and self-polishing — as sparingly as possible and to polish or buff polishing wax thoroughly. Actually, the more shine the less slip, because the more buffing a polishing wax receives, the harder and drier the film becomes.

For floor safety in general, wipe up spilled liquids or tracked-in moisture during wet weather, and pick up children's things. Even paper on floors can be slippery. Also anchor scatter rugs with non-slip backing.



## **(2) Scuff marks**

If a waxed floor shows footmarks, either too much wax has been applied or it has not been buffed sufficiently. This fault often occurs with the self-polishing waxes. A light buffing will correct the difficulty and improve the gloss.

## **(3) Black rubber heel marks**

These marks can be removed by rubbing with a clean cloth or fine steelwool dipped in wax. Then blend wax over cleaned area.

## **(4) Should you use a plastic finish on hard surface floors?**

Do not use lacquer, varnish, shellac, or other so-called "plastic" finishes on your hard surface floors. They soften and pit some floors and change the colors of others. When the finish begins to wear, as it will eventually, it is very difficult to remove remaining traces of the film. You will be complicating your floor problems by using one of these finishes.

## **(5) How to remove plastic finishes**

For sheet type of hard surface floor coverings: Never use alkaline types of paint or varnish remover. If special instructions come with the remover, follow them. If in doubt, use the removers recommended below, applying them to a few square feet of floor at a time. When finish has softened, wipe it off with a clean cloth. *Do not scrape*, as you may damage the floor. Since most of these films are not easily dissolved, vigorous scrubbing may be necessary.

Shellac — remove with denatured alcohol.

Brushing lacquer or varnish — remove with ethyl acetate or lacquer remover.

Liquid plastic finish — use remover recommended by manufacturer.

For linoleum tile floors: Rub finish off with fine steelwool. This is a difficult and time-consuming chore but the only possible way, since solvents might loosen or damage the tiles if they were to leak between them.

## **(6) Yellowing or discoloration**

This may be caused by incomplete removal of floor wax. You may have noticed this particularly around furniture or near walls where there is little traffic. Thorough scrubbing with a polisher-scrubber will take up old wax. However, if you do not have a polisher, a commercial wax remover recommended for hard surface floors will do the job. Dilute the cleaner, according to directions, with very hot water, and let stand on the floor a few minutes until the old wax begins to turn gray. At this point, mop up the solution and rinse the floor; when the floor is dry, it is ready for waxing.

A preparation of mild detergent, household ammonia and water is usually as effective as the commercial preparations. Refer to the "Use of Wax Removers," page 9, for proportions.

The new clear self-polishing waxes on the market today are good for light-colored resilient floor coverings.

#### (7) *Tacky or sticky floors*

Tackiness on waxed floors may be caused by insufficient rinsing when cleaning the floor, by dirt, or by an extreme humidity. Remove the wax, rinse well and let dry thoroughly, then apply wax.

#### (8) *Water spotting*

When a good water-resistant self-polishing wax has been used and it does not seem to resist water spotting, the floor has not been properly cleaned or rinsed thoroughly before wax was applied. Do not apply wax over a soapy film left on an unrinsed floor. Clean the floor thoroughly and rinse well; let floor dry completely, then apply wax.

#### (9) *Bleeding colors*

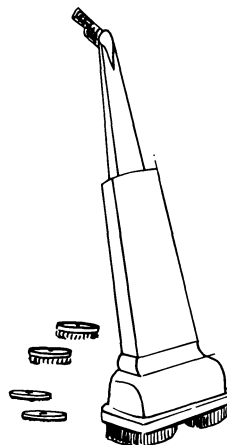
Bleeding colors of asphalt or rubber tile are caused by using waxes or cleaners containing solvents, as explained on page 7. Oil-treated mops can also create this situation. Use a commercial wax remover which when mixed with water and applied to the floor, will aid in the removal of this discoloration. In extreme cases where squares of different colors have run badly, it may be necessary to clean each square separately to avoid blending one color into another.

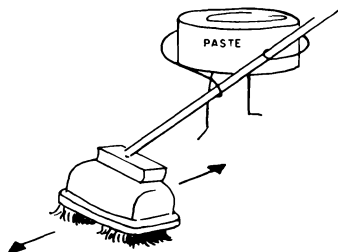


### CARING FOR FLOORS WITH ELECTRIC EQUIPMENT

**How to wax with a polisher.** Most polishers are provided with 2 sets of brushes — one for waxing and scrubbing, the other for polishing and buffing. For waxing, you can use the waxing brushes alone or place steel-wool pads over them to spread the wax.

To apply paste polishing wax, spread a small amount of paste wax *thinly* on





waxing brushes (or steel-wool pads) with a spatula. Guide polisher back and forth (on wood, follow the grain) until wax is spread evenly. Apply more wax as needed, but keep the film thin. Two thin coats are better than one heavy coat.

To apply liquid polishing wax, pour small pools of wax (about the size of a half-dollar) about a foot apart over a six-foot area. With waxing brushes, slowly draw polisher through wax, spreading it evenly. Continue until floor is completely waxed. NOTE: Let waxed floors dry half an hour, or until they are no longer tacky, before polishing.

#### How to scrub with a polisher.

The scrubbing brushes on a polisher can be used to suds-scrub any type of floor except wood, which should never, of course, be scrubbed with water. Here's the easy procedure to follow:



1. Using detergent or resilient floor cleaner, make up a small quantity of sudsy solution—about a quart or so.

2. Pour on the floor a small pool of the solution—enough to moisten an area about four feet square. Let the scrubbing brushes whirl until suds are dirty. (If there's any splashing, too much solution has been used.)

3. Turn off the polisher and wipe the dirty suds with a mop and warm water. This prevents suds from drying on the floor.

4. Move from section to section of the floor, scrubbing and wiping up, until the entire floor is cleaned. Then swish a well-rinsed mop over the floor quickly to remove the last traces of suds and water. Let the floor dry thoroughly.

NOTE: Do not use a floor polisher to apply self-polishing wax. A self-polishing wax must be stroked on. It dries too rapidly to be applied with a polisher. Then, too, rubbing self-polishing wax while it dries dims the gloss.