Sustainable Flooring™ Cleaning and Maintenance Guidelines

Many steps can be taken to help extend the life of a wood or cork floor and keep it looking good throughout its lifetime, a lifetime which can approach multiple decades with proper care and maintenance.

**Wood Floors:**

**Cleaning:**

Let me stress at this point that no matter what cleaning product is chosen, wet mopping should never be a part of any hardwood floor cleaning regimen. Wet mopping will in short order ruin any wood floor, no matter whose material it is. The three components that you should use, in any frequency you choose, are vacuuming, dry mopping, and occasionally the cleaning substance of your choice.

Vacuuming is for larger particulates and keeping most smaller pieces that can likely lead to scratches up and off the floor surface (because of the high pounds per sq. inch pressure they would inflict if stepped on or caught and dragged across the floor).

Dry mopping is for dust and very small particles and some filmy residues that collect on the surface (think of a Swiffer™ if you are unfamiliar with dry mopping, although there are other options available, even some with pads that can be washed and reused).

And if a cleaning solution is deemed necessary, it should be used in conjunction with a dry mop and the cleaning procedure could be equated to that of cleaning house windows with Windex™. A very light “spritzing” is all the liquid that should be necessary then use the dry mop as you would paper towels on a window to spread the solution around and absorb it when done. Our preferred cleaning products are all from a brand called Bona (or Bona Kemi, it is a Swedish company) and their website is linked here: [www.mybonahome.com/Home.aspx](http://www.mybonahome.com/Home.aspx). They are healthy for human use and effective for what they are supposed to do.

**Maintenance:**

The most common maintenance question we receive is how to avoid scratches on a wood floor. Avoiding scratches is always desirable and it can be a great way to increase the time a floor looks good between refinishings, but to be clear there is no such thing as a scratch-proof floor. But to avoid
scratches as best you can it is helpful to think of scratches as a ratio of weight pushing down on the floor compared to the size of the surface actually hitting the floor (also called a point-load ratio or equation). There are rarely numbers involved but, for example, high heel shoes are to be avoided because compared to flat shoes the pressure from the body above the shoes is highly concentrated into a small point (the heel spike). Another example is a piece of gravel on the floor getting stepped on or possibly stuck in a boot. Here are some ways to avoid scratches:

Sweep the floor regularly to prevent a buildup of grit and particulates that can be stepped on or dragged across the floor surface.

Pad the legs or feet of heavy objects that will be placed on or near the floor.

Avoid high heels whenever possible.

Keep pet claws trimmed.

Place mats or rugs in high traffic or commonly used areas.

Boots or shoes should be removed if they might contain gravel or particulates that could damage the finish.

If scratches do occur there are some easy, small solutions you can employ or there are some more extensive ones. The small solution is to use what is called a stain pen (Minwax™ has many colors available and they should be stocked at hardware or home stores) to essentially color in and hide a single, obvious scratch and avoid the need for more extensive and expensive remedies. Follow instructions from Minwax™ or the stain pen manufacturer.

Eventually, in the long term, most materials received from us can be sanded and refinished either with a spot refinishing, where only a small area is sanded and refinished, or by redoing the entire floor’s surface. Refinishing is for the most part a subjective decision that you can make whenever you deem it necessary. It will return a wood floor to looking brand new so down the road you can weigh the potential for rejuvenating the look of the wood against the cost an installer will charge for it. It is really up to you and how "sensitive," for lack of a better word, you are about the eventual wear and tear that all floors experience. One caveat to this is if your material contains a topical stain the refinishing process will either need to include a re-staining of the wood (and it may be difficult to duplicate the exact shade) or you will lose the stain color of the wood and it will go back to its natural shade. Please consult an NWFA installer in your area for further advice on refinishing or you may direct further questions to Sustainable Flooring.
The final piece of maintenance advice is to always avoid standing water on your floor. Water and wood never mix well and care should be taken to see that they stay as separate as possible. Topical water like spills and splashes do happen from time to time and wood finishes help protect the wood from these occurrences. But if this does happen it should be cleaned up immediately and water damage is almost always the responsibility of the caretaker to avoid since water and wood do not get along. Rugs and mats placed on the floor to protect it can be a hidden source of grit, grime, and also even moisture so they should be properly cleaned and maintained as well.

*Cork Floors:*

Cork plank floors and cork tile floors can generally use many of the same cleaning and maintenance guidelines as the wood floor advice detailed above. There are a few minor details to consider, however, below:

Cork is not nearly as sensitive as wood is to water so, while we still think the hardwood cleaning and maintenance instructions should be sufficient for most cork floors, water is not as big of a deal when maintaining a cork floor because cork is 100% impermeable to water (reason for its use in wine bottles, etc.). That being said, finish is what protects cork from staining if spilled on and cork planks have an interior core material that is more sensitive to water than the cork is so it should remain dry (Unlike cork tiles which are sold cork throughout). This is why we still tend to recommend that the wood cleaning and maintenance procedures be followed.

Cork is a softer material which can be both an advantage and a disadvantage in some instances. When compressed with immobile pressure, cork can reform to 99.9% of its original volume after that weight is removed so it is very resilient. However, it may be more susceptible to mobile pressure like sliding a heavy object across it when it relates to gouging or scraping the finish than a more rigid material might be. Cork is generally less susceptible to finish scratches but more vulnerable to gouges and wear-through of the finish faster than wood.

Refinishing cork is often times possible but it will depend on the kind of finish that is on the material and also if the cork pattern chosen is a solid pattern (meaning it is the same pattern all the way through the thickness of the material) or if it is a veneer (a thin sheet of cork that contains the products pattern with different-looking cork underneath that thin layer which may be damaged in a refinishing process). Please contact Sustainable Flooring for more information on this.

Cork can be stained using common stain products but should be attempted in consultation with a certified NWFA installer.