



**GILFORD-JOHNSON**  
FLOORING

1-866-940-5603  
tech@gilfordjohnson.com

## **EDUCATING YOUR CUSTOMERS ABOUT MAINTENANCE**



Wood flooring is one of the only floor coverings that, when properly maintained, will last for the lifetime of the home.

As a professional in this trade, it is our responsibility to educate the end-user on how to maintain their wood floors to keep them looking as good as the day we deliver the final product to them. Most wood floors can be cared for with minimal effort, and in many cases, a little preventive maintenance will help maintain and enhance the natural patina an aged floor acquires year after year.

One of the biggest misnomers our trade deals with is the idea that, as the floor ages, changes color, and even changes dimensions, this is somehow a negative thing. The



**GILFORD·JOHNSON**  
FLOORING

1-866-940-5603  
tech@gilfordjohnson.com

reality is, the most beautiful, and often-imitated floors being sold today, are those doing their best to replicate what age naturally does to a wood floor.

Even wood floors that are more traditional, sanded flat with film-forming finishes, will grow in beauty with age and wear. However, age and normal wear should not be confused with a poorly maintained wood floor. Regardless of what kind of wood floor, or which type of finish is used, all wood floors need to be cleaned regularly.

### **Proper Cleaning**

The challenge we consistently battle surrounds what our customers use to clean their floors. With all of the options on the shelves at the grocery store and big-box stores, and touted on the late-night infomercials, it's no wonder the end-user gets misled with their cleaning product purchases. We often battle the preconceived notion that regular use of steam (vapor water), or a product that is marketed to rejuvenate or add luster, or polish, or restore the wood floor, is all that is needed to retain the beauty of the floor.

The most straightforward and safest advice for the end-user is to follow these steps to ensure their floor will perform as it was intended:

- Wipe up all spills immediately.
- Only use vacuum cleaners that have a setting for hard-surfaces. Turn off the beater bars/brushes on the vacuum cleaner when present.
- 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** on wood floors. Water in a vapor form will penetrate the wood fibers and cause irreversible damage to the wood flooring and the finish.
- Use breathable throw rugs both inside and outside the doorways to prevent grit, salt, chemicals, sand, moisture and other debris from being tracked onto the wood floors.
- For wood flooring installed in the kitchen, place a breathable area rug in front of the kitchen sink and stove.
- Rugs should be shaken out, cleaned, and thoroughly dried when they get wet.
- Check with the finish manufacturer for when rugs can be placed on the newly finished floor. In general, they should not be placed on a newly finished floor for a minimum of seven days after the final coat of finish has been applied.
- Take special precautions with non-skid pads that are frequently placed under area rugs. Some of these pads may imprint their pattern onto the finish and/or the wood floor. (Natural fibers may not transfer as much as some synthetic pads.)



**GILFORD•JOHNSON**  
FLOORING

1-866-940-5603  
tech@gilfordjohnson.com

- Be aware that area rugs cover the wood floor, protecting it from UV/sun exposure, which results in color differences in the wood floor.
- Put fabric-faced glides under the legs of furniture to prevent scuffing and scratching. Periodically check these floor protectors for embedded soil and replace as necessary.
- Avoid walking on your floor with cleats, sports shoes, and high heels. A 125-pound woman in high heels has an impact of 2,000 pounds per square inch. An exposed heel can exert up to 8,000 pounds per square inch. This kind of impact will dent any floor surface.
- Keep pet claws trimmed and in good repair.
- When moving heavy furniture, do not slide it on wood flooring. It is best to pick up the furniture completely to avoid scratching the floors.
- When moving appliances (refrigerators, stoves, etc.), use safety glides. On newly finished floors, wait a minimum of three days before replacing appliances.
- Use an appropriate humidifier throughout the winter/dry months and/or a dehumidifier in the summer/humid months to keep wood movement and shrinkage to a minimum. It is important to maintain a consistent environment throughout the year to minimize floor movement.
- When the floor loses its luster, it's time for a recoat.

Beyond these general guidelines, it is essential to know which type of finish has been used on the floor for other maintenance concerns. Different wood flooring finishes require different care, and it is important to use the right product to protect the floors and prolong their life.

### **Factory-Finished Floors**

Finishes used on factory-finished floors may include aluminum oxides, urethanes, penetrating oils, Teflon-infused, acrylic impregnated, or many other types. Because of these variances in product types, it is critical to determine which finish is used on the floor to know how to care for it. For factory-finished wood floors, consumers should follow the directions of the flooring manufacturer as to which cleaning products to use. This is extremely important because not following those directions may void the manufacturer's warranty of the floor.

### **Site Finished Floors (Film-forming finishes)**

Film-forming finishes may include any varnish, oil-modified urethane, waterborne urethane, moisture-cured urethane, conjugated oil varnish, conversion varnish or UV-cured finish. Each of these types of film-forming finishes does as the name describes;



**GILFORD•JOHNSON**  
FLOORING

1-866-940-5603  
tech@gilfordjohnson.com

they form a protective film of finish over the wood flooring. Maintenance for these types of finishes includes:

- For site finished wood floors, follow the finish manufacturer's maintenance recommendations.
- When the wood or finish manufacturer is unknown, use a wood floor cleaning product available from a local wood flooring professional.
- Using a non-recommended product to clean the floor may ruin the intended appearance of the finish, and it may also cause problems when it is time for the floor to be recoated.
- Do not use sheet vinyl or tile floor care products on wood floors. Self-polishing acrylic waxes cause wood to become slippery and appear dull quickly.
- Excessive use of wood floor cleaners can damage the wood floor. Only use as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Do not use household dust treatments.
- Never use wax on non-waxed surface finishes.
- Do not use petroleum-based cleaners on waterborne finishes.
- Do not use vinegar on wood floor finishes. Vinegar is acidic and will degrade the floor finish.

### **Natural Oiled Floors**

Natural oils are oxidizing oils that typically consist of tung, linseed, vegetable, or other oxidizing oils that penetrate to varying degrees into the wood surface, filling and surrounding the wood fibers. Maintenance for these finishes is usually product specific:

- On oil-finished floors, use only what the manufacturer recommends to clean the floors. The oil finish may periodically need to be reapplied by a professional. There are many different types of oil finishes, and each has a specific maintenance program.
- Use of a dry microfiber mop will safely and effectively remove loose debris from the surface.
- Many natural oil manufacturers recommend a specific maintenance routine of using oils and soaps on a regular basis. Failure to follow specific maintenance procedures will result in a finish that will not perform as it's intended to.

### **Waxed Floors**

Wax finishes soak into the pores of the wood and harden to form a penetrating protective seal. The wax gives a low-gloss satin sheen. It generally is maintained with additional



**GILFORD•JOHNSON**  
FLOORING

1-866-940-5603  
tech@gilfordjohnson.com

thin applications of wax. Only solvent-based waxes, buffing pastes, or cleaning liquids made specifically for wax-finished wood floors should be used.

- On a wax finish, do not over wax a wood floor. If the floor dulls, try buffing instead. Avoid wax buildup under furniture and other light traffic areas by applying wax in these spots every other waxing session.
- On a waxed floor, to remove water spots, use a fine steel wool, a soft cloth, or a synthetic pad and a small amount of mineral spirits. Rub gently in a circular motion until the spot is gone. Then re-wax the area and buff.
- On waxed and oiled floors, never use water-based cleaners. Only use specific maintenance products from the finish manufacturer.

### **Acrylic Impregnated Floors**

Acrylic impregnated finishes are injected into the wood to create a super-hard, extremely durable floor. Acrylic impregnated finishes are rarely used in residential applications. They most often are used in very high-traffic areas in commercial settings such as malls and restaurants.

- Use a low-speed buffer/rotary machine with the pads and cleaning products recommended by the flooring manufacturer as needed. Some manufacturers will specify different pads for different steps within this maintenance process.
- Only use flooring manufacturer recommended dust-mop treatments to enhance dust mopping.
- For white/bleached acrylic enhanced products, always use an untreated mop. Never use water or petroleum-based products. The floor should be buffed with a low-speed buffer and a recommended product specifically for white/bleached floors. More maintenance will be required for white/bleached floors.
- Some flooring manufacturers recommend that floors that have become dull can be lightly screened. Then, a recommended conditioning product should be used.
- Follow the manufacturer's directions for spot cleaning stubborn stains. Methods may include spot sanding or screening and then applying the recommended cleaner and conditioner, or using mineral spirits or hydrogen peroxide and a hand-sized piece of synthetic pad to remove the stain.
- Note that recoating these types of floors with a urethane will typically void any manufacturer's warranty.

### **Sports Floors**

Sports floors from basketball to aerobics studios usually take a beating from heavy daily use. Specific recommendations for sports floors are available from the Maple Flooring



**GILFORD·JOHNSON**  
FLOORING

1-866-940-5603  
tech@gilfordjohnson.com

Manufacturers Association at [maplefloor.org](http://maplefloor.org). General MFMA guidelines include the following:

- Dry mop the floor daily with a properly treated dust mop. Floors with especially heavy use should be swept up to three times per day.
- Use walk-off mats at all doorways.
- Wipe up spills or any other moisture on the floor immediately.
- Remove heel marks/scuffs using a floor finish manufacturer's approved wood floor cleaner applied with a soft cloth or dust mop.
- Do not use household cleaning products or products designed for other flooring surfaces, which may damage the floor finish and also may leave the floor sticky or slippery.
- Do not clean the floor with scrubbing machinery or power scrubbers, unless the flooring and finish manufacturer recommends doing so.
- Ensure the HVAC system is working properly, with normal humidity levels and temperatures. Indoor relative humidity should be maintained between 30-50 percent and a temperature between 60-80 °F year-round.
- Do not shut down the HVAC system for prolonged periods of time.
- Inspect the floor for abnormal shrinkage and swelling. During the summer months/humid seasons, carefully monitor all exterior doors and windows for leaks.
- Remove debris from expansion voids within the flooring system.