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The Correct Ways for Cleaning and Maintaining Laminate Floors

By Ron Starkey, NALFA Certified Installer/Inspector

Laminate Flooring's stain and moisture-resistant surface coating makes spills and other messes easy to handle. Learning the proper way to clean and maintain laminate flooring is key to the longevity of this flooring element.

There are misconceptions floating around about the proper way to clean laminate flooring. While laminate flooring is one of the most durable flooring products available, I'd like to address several misconceptions and mistakes and explain just how easy laminate floors are to take care of.

Misconception #1: Laminate floors can be cleaned with a steam mop. You may have seen the commercials that show how to do it, but the steam being applied to the laminate flooring is actually doing more harm than good due to the composition of laminate flooring. As a rule of thumb, steam or large amounts of water should not be applied directly to the floor. The core of all laminate flooring consists of a wood-based product. Add steam or large amounts of water and you have the start of problems such as swelling seams.

Misconception #2: Laminate floors should be polished or waxed. Polish or wax won't stick to the surface and after some foot traffic the wax or polish will start to come off. Fortunately for home and building owners, laminate floors do not require waxes or varnishes to keep it looking great, so they can save a few dollars on buying those products.

Misconception #3: Use a cleaner that includes detergent. These types of cleaners can cause damage to the locking system by penetrating the core material and causing the seams to swell. Always choose/recommend a detergent-free cleaner to avoid causing harm to the laminate flooring.

Misconception #4: Use a floor sweeper with a beater bar. The beater bar could cause scratching to the floor and should be avoided. Cleaning a laminate floor the proper way is really pretty simple. It doesn't take special machines or cleaners. Most laminate manufacturers recommend that their floors be cleaned with a dust mop. If spills or excessive dirt are on the floor, a detergent-free spray cleaner applied to a dust mop will do the trick. A small, upright-only vacuum (without the beater bar in the on position) is also acceptable. If the floor connects to an outside entrance, a wipe-off mat is recommended to help keep dirt and moisture from the floor.

While laminate flooring is known for its durability, proper care is important to get the maximum life out of the product. Make sure to avoid the above misconceptions and discuss the correct cleaning procedures with the end user following completion of the installation.

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About the Author: Ron Starkey is an installation expert who has worked in the floorcovering industry for 46 years in various roles. He is an NALFA Certified Installer and NALFA Certified Inspector with over 20 years of experience inspecting floor installations.