

## Title:

How to Evaluate and Care for Hard Wood Floors

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## Summary:

Hardwood floors can create a feeling of warmth and elegance in a home or business. However, hardwood floors can also be a nightmare for your cleaning company to keep looking good. Knowing what to do and when to do it will help you to keep hardwood floors in prime condition.

## Keywords:

evaluate, care, hard wood floors

## Article Body:

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Hardwood floors can create a feeling of warmth and elegance in a home or business. However, hardwood floors can also be a nightmare for your cleaning company to keep looking good. Knowing what to do and when to do it will help you to keep hardwood floors in prime condition.

Before beginning a maintenance program on a hardwood floor it's a good idea to ask questions about the background of the floor (finish used, when it was last sanded, etc.). If that information isn't available, then you'll need to assess the floor to determine the condition of the floor. Some basic observations of the wood and the finish will help to determine what type of cleaning or refinishing is needed.

Begin by evaluating the condition of the wood. If the floor has extensive damage, warped boards and a lot of wear, the entire floor may need to be replaced. But that is the worst case scenario. Inspect the entire floor, including the edges, and look for differences in the level of the floor. Following are categories you can assign to the floor:

A. Overall very good condition. The hardwood floor looks good or may even be new. The floor may just need a good cleaning to get its luster back.

B. Slight scuffed. The floor is in fairly good condition, however, has a few scuffs and scratches, especially in high traffic areas.

C. Heavy wear. The floor has quite a few scratches, scrapes and dents and looks worn in places. It may even have a few expansion cracks.

D. Warped appearance. The boards in the floor have some minor warping, uneven boards, and many scratches and scrapes.

Next decide the condition of the finish. The condition of the finish may be related to the condition of the wood. For instance if there are deep cuts, scratches or chips in the finish they may go through the finish and into the wood itself. Look at the finish decide what categories are applicable:

A. The floor has a finish, but it looks dirty. The floor most likely just needs a good cleaning to get back that glossy luster.

B. The finish has light scratches, dings and chips and is worn (or is dull) in heavy traffic areas.

C. The finish is chipped in many places. Although the floor definitely has a finish, there are light scrapes, scratches and dings throughout the finish.

D. Finish is worn. There is little or no finish on the floor. The finish may appear to have deep gouges from dragging furniture across it.

E. No finish. The finish is gone or chipped and has a poor appearance.

If the wood and the finish are in good or reasonably good condition, a good cleaning and starting up a routine maintenance program is the next step. If the wood (category C, D or E) or finish (C, D or E) is in bad shape, you may need to do more research or consult a professional on the best way to proceed.

Properly maintaining hardwood floors is important to keep them looking good and extend their lifespan. It is extremely important to remove all the dirt, dropped food, grit and other debris that can end up on and ground into hardwood floors. Dirt that is not removed quickly can be "camouflaged" in the pattern or color of the wood making it not only difficult to see, but easy to ignore. There are several tools that you can use to remove dirt:

1. Brooms- make sure to use a broom that has "exploded" ends that can sweep up dust and fine grit.

2. Vacuums - Any type except an upright vacuum with a beater bar and brushes. These can cause damage to the floor.

3. Dust mop. Dust mopping and vacuuming are the most effective methods of removing debris from floors. If using a dust mop, buy a high quality mop with an eighteen inch head. Treat the mop with a dust mop treatment so it grabs the dirt and doesn't just push it around.

Sweeping, vacuuming or dust mopping regularly is great for getting rid of the dirt, but you will still need to clean the floor. The best method to use is to mop the floor. Use a neutral cleaner (pH of 7) that is for use on hardwood floors and follow the product's directions. Following are a few tips that will help to protect any hardwood floors that you care for:

Good matting is the best way to keep damaging soil and grit from getting onto and ground into the floor. Mats on the outside entryway will help to remove some soils. Make sure any mat(s) used inside (and on the floor) is a good quality rug that does not have a rubber coating. Plasticizers used on some rugs can "migrate" or move from the rug and into the finish of the wood floor.

High heels can cause permanent damage to hardwood floors. The spikes on heels can create dimples in hardwood floors. In a business it may not be possible to keep high heels off the hardwood floors, but if you are cleaning a residential floor, you can let the homeowner know of the problems associated with high heels.

Dragging furniture across the floor. This can cause scratches and dents in the floor. Anytime furniture needs to be moved it should be lifted and carried. Furniture legs need to be in good shape. A loose leg on a chair can dig into the floor's finish anytime someone sits down in the chair.

Spills (food, cleaners, alcohol, oils) can damage the finish and the wood. Clean up spills as soon as possible.

Bright sunlight can bleach, darken or dry out wood. It may be necessary to cover windows with drapes or blinds to keep the ultraviolet rays off the wood.

Harsh cleaners can damage a floor's finish. When cleaning floors use a neutral cleaner that is designed for use on wood floors. A beautiful looking hardwood floor will get noticed. Keeping the floors properly maintenance will keep the floor looking lustrous, your customers happy, and your cash flowing!