

## Finish Strong

Polyurethane is the most common finish for hardwood floors. It will stand up to most abuse we will throw at it. Polyurethane comes in either water based or oil based formulations, each of which has its own strengths and weaknesses. For sake of brevity I will tell you to speak with our paint department to determine which formulation is right for you.

It's important that you go over the floor with the polisher and a steel wool pad after your first coat has dried.

This will accomplish three things. It will eliminate "grain raise" which is caused by the grain of the wood absorbing the finish at varying rates. Grain raise causes the first coat to not be smooth.

Next it will polish the first coat, resulting in a nicer finish. Finally it will lightly score the first coat which will allow the second coat to bond to it rather than simply lay on top of it.

Provided you get your third coat on while the second coat is still "soft", you do not need to use the steel wool pad between the second and third coat. For oil based formulations this means the third coat is applied within 24 hours of the second coat being applied.

## One final comment

We have been renting out floor care equipment since 1963. Over that time we have seen plenty of people try to cut corners by skipping a grit, not using steel wool after the first coat, putting down only one or two coats instead of three and a variety of other ways.

Skipping a step will either cause you to spend more time than you need to on a finer grit or leave a less smooth finish that be magnified once you put down your finish. Not using steel wool will affect the appearance and smoothness of the next two coats, prevent the coats from bonding and result in the floor needing to be refinished sooner. Using only one or two coats will result in the floor needing to be refinished again much sooner.

You are going to a lot of effort to refinish your floors. Properly done, your work can last 20 years or more. Using a short cut will greatly impact the appearance and durability of the floor. **Please make the most of your time and effort by doing the job the right way the first time.**

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## Guide to Refinishing Your Floors *Without* Sanding

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## Why refinish your floors?

A home project you can accomplish yourself and will provide a great payback is to refinish your hardwood floors.

One of the most common phone calls we get is from people looking to refinish their hardwood floors. They typically ask about renting a floor sander and an edger. In most cases we are able to suggest floor screening as opposed to floor sanding.

Screening will save you a lot of time, money and work. This pamphlet is intended to help you understand the screening process and determine if it is a good option for your floors.



## What is screening?

Screening is faster, less expensive and cleaner way to refinish a floor. It uses a floor polisher (like a custodian would use to buff a floor) with abrasive mesh screens of varying grit. Screening removes the floor finish without cutting deeply into the wood itself.

It's important to note that you can't screen a floor that has been waxed. The reason for this is that the wax gets in the seams between the boards and cannot be sanded out. This wax will react with the new finish, somewhat like oil and water mixing. It just won't work.

## Can I screen rather than sand?

You can typically screen the floor if:

- There is no cupping of the floor or the boards
- There is no bowing of the floor or the boards
- There are no deep scratches (light scratches are okay)
- There are no deep stains (light surface stains are okay)
- The floor has not been waxed

## What's the difference between floor sanding and floor screening?

### Floor Sanding

Floor sanding is done when floors are so deteriorated that they must be sanded to re-level the boards, remove warping, bowing or cupping of the wood or to remove stains.

Floor sanding uses a total of three machines to accomplish the job, a floor sander, a floor edger and a floor polisher. Floor sanding (when properly done) generally takes a minimum of three passes with the floor sander and a floor edger. Each pass uses increasingly finer grit paper and then a final pass with a floor polisher using a fine screen.

Floor sanding (when properly done) is far more labor intensive, will cost considerably more and will create a bigger mess than screening



### Floor Screening

Floor screening is done when the floors are in overall good shape and just need to be refreshed. It uses a floor polisher and sanding screens to accomplish the job.

You typically make three passes over the floor using increasingly finer screens. Because the screens are laying flat on the floor and operating at relatively low speed, far less dust is put into the air, meaning it is easier to clean up.

## What do I need to screen a floor?

- A floor polisher
- A green or black floor polishing pad
- Three grits of sanding screens
- a steel wool pad
- A vacuum to clean the room after sanding
- Plastic to seal off the room to contain any dust
- A dust respirator

## Before you start.

Remove everything from the room you can, especially items that collect dust, such as furniture, carpets and paintings.

Seal off all doorways and air ducts with plastic sheeting and masking tape.

Make sure you remove any molding along the walls, which will provide a more professional appearance when you are done.

You want to make sure there are no nail heads sticking up from the floor. You may want to use wood putty to fill any gaps between the boards.

## How does screening work?

Screening is done with a 17-inch floor polisher, which works like a giant oscillating sander. It's easy to use and will not leave swirl marks. The machine doesn't require a lot of strength and "steering" is done by simply pressing up or down on the handle. We recommend you use it with just a pad for a few minutes to get comfortable before you begin sanding

You'll be screening most of the floor with the floor polisher and screens. To be thorough, use at least three screening grits, from rough to smooth

- 60 grit is used to remove the floor finish
- 80 or 100 grit to open the pores of the wood
- 120 or 150 grit to sand to a smooth finish

For corners and edges, use a palm sander or sanding pad fitted with sandpaper.

Once you have finished screening, wipe down and vacuum dust from all surfaces, especially window sills.

*A word of caution: Make sure you empty the vacuum and keep the saw dust away from flammable materials since the dust can spontaneously combust.*

Wipe down the floor with tack cloth but avoid getting the wood too wet.