

Restore Wood Flooring - Bring Back Its Timeless Beauty

Wood flooring can be a great asset to your home. It is very neutral in color and style, which makes it easy to decorate around, and it always compliments the current decorating trends. In addition to enhancing your home's beauty, wood floors raise the value of your home. So refinishing your wood floors is a process well worth your time. Your floor will look like new after following these sanding and refinishing steps.



Prepare the Floor

Before sanding and refinishing, your wood floor needs to be prepared.

Tools and Materials you need:

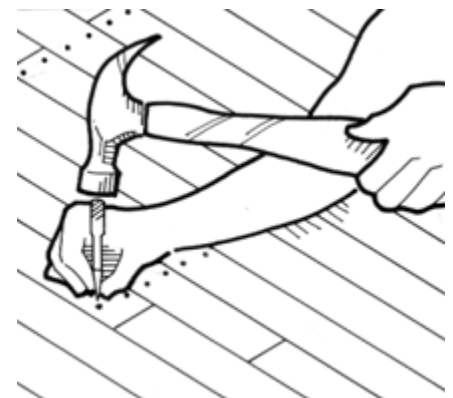
- Claw hammer
- Nail set (or punch)
- Finishing nails (1 1/4-inch and 1 1/2-inch in size)

Step 1. Clear the Area

Clear the room of anything that can be damaged, including all furniture, drapes and the base shoe moldings, which are connected to the wall at the floor. Anything left in the room will be covered with a layer of sawdust from sanding.

Step 2. Repair the Floorboards

Make the necessary repairs to the floorboards. Nail down any loose floorboards using a hammer and nails and placing the new nails close to the loosened nail in the floorboard. Some floorboards may not be loose but the nails may have protruded slightly from the floor. Pound them back into the floorboard so the head of the nail is level with the floorboard. This is



called countersinking the nails. If any nails are sticking up, they can tear the sandpaper while sanding. Hold the nail set on the tip of the nails and tap them back into place with the hammer.

Step 3. Sand with the Edger

Once the floor is sanded with the rough paper, sand the edges with the edger and a disc of rough sandpaper. Holding both handles of the edger, sand around the perimeter of the room where the drum sander could not reach. When sanding with this machine, always hold it just above the floor with the sanding disc sweeping across the floor. Do not put the machine's weight on the floor while running or it will leave marks and be hard to control. Move the edger over the floor going in a side-to-side motion with the sanding disc barely touching the floor. Repeat this until the entire perimeter of the room has been sanded.

Tools and Materials you need:

- Plastic drop cloth
- Masking tape
- Extension cords
- Dust mask or respirator
- Earplugs
- Drum sandpaper (rough 36 grit, medium 50-60 grit, and fine 80-100 grit)
- Floor sander
- Edger sandpaper disks (rough 36 grit, medium 50-60 grit, and fine 80-100 grit)
- Edger sander
- Scraper (for corners)
- Sandpaper (for finishing corners)
- Putty knife
- Latex wood filler
- Gloves
- Vacuum cleaner

Rent the Machines

Rent the necessary machines from your local machine rental store to sand and refinish the floor. The two machines are a drum sander and an edger. The drum sander is used to sand the majority of the floor, but cannot reach the 4 inches closest to the wall. The edger sands those 4 inches closest to the wall. Neither of these machines can sand the corner, so you also need

to rent a scraper, which is a blade held in place by a handle made for sanding corners. With your rented tools, you will need two types of sandpaper. One is a long piece that connects to the drum sander and one is a circular disk that connects to the edger. Each can be found where you rent the equipment, just ask a store employee for assistance.

Step 1. Seal the Room with a Drop Cloth

Seal off the doorways with a plastic drop cloth and masking tape to keep the rest of the house clean. It is best to keep all the saw dust in the one room or the entire house will have to be cleaned.



Step 2. Sand with the Drum Sander

Load the drum sander with the 36 grit rough sandpaper. Plug the machine in; use an extension cord if necessary. Before turning it on, adjust the raise-and-lower lever to make sure the sandpaper is not touching the floor. You must keep the drum sander moving at all times or else it leaves groves in the wood. If the sandpaper is touching the wood before you turn it on, it will make a groove in the floor. Once turned on, lower the lever so the sandpaper touches the floor. Moving constantly forward and backward, sand the grain of the wood in the same

direction as the floorboards. It is similar to mowing your lawn because you work in rows. Start at one corner and pull the machine as far down the floor as possible. Go over the row a few times until the old finish has been removed. Pull the lever up to remove the sandpaper from the floor and turn the machine off. Once you have sanded one complete row, turn off the sander and turn it around to sand the area you were standing in. Repeat this process in rows until the entire floor is sanded. When the sander is not taking the finish off anymore, change the sandpaper.



CAUTION: Always wear a dust mask or respirator when using a sander to prevent inhalation of sawdust. Since the machines are so loud, wear plugs for ear protection.

Step 3. Sand with the Edger

Once the floor is sanded with the rough paper, sand the edges with the edger and a disc of rough sandpaper. Holding both handles of the edger, sand around the perimeter of the room where the drum sander could not reach. When sanding with this machine, always hold it just above the floor with the sanding disc sweeping across the floor. Do not put the machine's weight on the floor while running or it will leave marks and be hard to control. Move the edger over the floor going in a side-to-side motion with the sanding disc barely touching the floor. Repeat this until the entire perimeter of the room has been sanded.



CAUTION: Do not turn the edger on if the disk is sitting directly on the floor, because you will lose control of the machine and it will leave gouges in your floor.

Step 4. Sand with the Drum Sander and Medium Grit Paper

Change the sandpaper in the drum sander to 50-60 medium grit sandpaper. Sand the entire floor the same as when using the rough grit sandpaper. After this step you should have all the finish off the floor. Remember that you will not be able to sand to the wall with the drum sander.



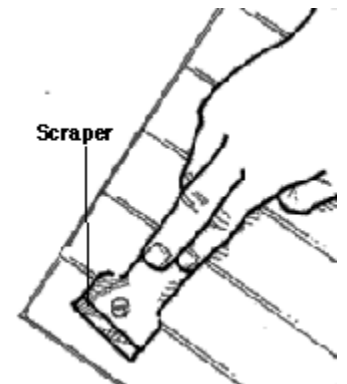
CAUTION: Wood shavings can be hazardous, so empty the sanders into plastic bags and tie them shut immediately.

Step 5. Sand with the Edger and Medium Grit Paper

Change the sandpaper on the edger to 50-60 medium grit sandpaper. Sand the perimeter of the room up to the wall using the same technique as when using the rough grit sandpaper.

Step 6. Scrape or Hand Sand the Corners

Neither the drum sander or the edger will fit in the corners, so sand them by hand with sandpaper or use a scraper. If you are using a scraper, hold it by the handle and scrape the blade over the area, pulling the tool toward you until the finish is gone. Repeat this step for any corner that the sanding machines cannot reach.



Step 7. Fill Holes with Latex Wood Filler

Sweep or vacuum up any dirt or dust from the sanding and scraping, and fill any holes with latex wood filler. Fill the holes or scratches generously and smooth over with a putty knife. If there are a lot of holes and scratches, use a putty knife to drag a film of latex wood filler over the entire floor and wipe off the excess. Let the area dry for about an hour.

Step 8. Sand with the Drum Sander and Fine Grit Paper

Change the sandpaper in the drum sander to 80-100 fine grit sandpaper. Sand over the entire floor with the drum sander using the same technique as when sanding with medium and rough sandpaper.

Step 9. Sand with the Edger and Fine Grit Paper

Change the sandpaper disc in the edger to 80-100 fine grit sandpaper. Sand the perimeter of the room that the drum sander missed using the same technique as before. Touch up the corners by hand with sandpaper.

Step 10. Vacuum Up Wood Shavings

Carefully vacuum over the wood with the floor attachment nozzle and clean up all the wood shavings. Apply the finish as soon as possible while your floor is free of dust and debris. Do not let anyone walk on the floor before the finish is applied, or dirt might be tracked on the wood.

Stain the Floor (Optional)

If you want your floor to be stained a darker or lighter color, these steps are taken before applying the finish. Remember that a natural finish looks just as good, so staining is optional. If you want to stain your wood floor with a stenciled design, see [Stenciling Wood Flooring](#).

Tools and Materials you need:

- Wood stain of choice
- 4-inch pure-bristle brush (or applicator and pad)
- Cotton rags

Step 1. Apply Stain

Apply the stain with the 4-inch brush or an applicator and pad. Distribute the stain across the entire room at a width of about 5 floorboards. You will have a strip that extends from one side of the room to the other that is 5 floorboards wide.

Step 2. Wipe Stain

Once the stain is applied, go back and wipe it off with a dry cotton rag. This will blend the stain into the wood and give it a rich look.

Step 3. Repeat until Floor is completely stained

Repeat this staining process in strips until the entire room is stained. The longer you leave the stain on without wiping it, the darker the wood will get. Be careful not to leave the stain on too long, and make sure the time between applying and wiping is the same for every row so the stain looks uniform.



TIP: Too Many Scratches? If you have lots of scratches and imperfections from sanding, it is best not to stain because stain will make the scratches more obvious. If you go directly to the finishing coat after sanding for a natural finish, the scratches will be less noticeable.

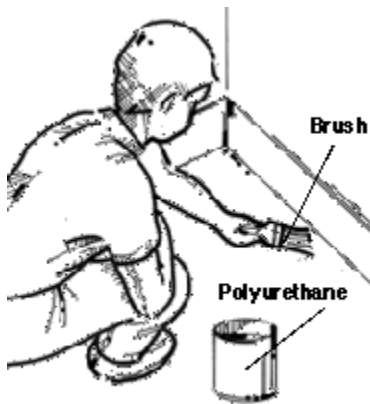
Apply the Finish

The final step to refinishing your wood floor is applying your finish of choice. Polyurethane is a synthetic varnish that is oil based and urethane is its counter product that is water based. Polyurethane is a harder, more durable finish, whereas urethane is less durable but more natural looking and does not yellow the wood like polyurethane does. Both are good choices and are available in matte, satin, semi-gloss and high gloss finishes.

Tools and Materials you need:

- Polyurethane (oil-based) or urethane (water-based) finish
- Paint tray
- Small and large applicator pads or 4-inch paintbrush
- Respirator
- Latex or rubber gloves
- Sandpaper

- Vacuum cleaner
- Paint thinner (for cleaning up polyurethane)



Step 1. Apply the Finish around the Perimeter of the Room

Fill the paint tray with finish and use a 4-inch paintbrush to apply polyurethane or urethane finish around the perimeter of the room. It is not necessary to paint the perimeter more than 4 inches from the wall during this step.



CAUTION: Both urethane and polyurethane finishes contain harmful fumes. When working with any finish, open windows and wear a respirator and latex or rubber gloves.

Step 2. Apply Finish to the Rest of the Floor

Starting at the farthest area from your exit, use a paintbrush or applicator pad to apply finish to the rest of the room. Do not use a roller because it will leave bubbles in the finish. Make sure to follow the grain of the wood.



TIP: Don't Get Trapped Make sure that you apply finish to the doorway area last and the farthest area from the door first. You don't want to get trapped in a corner and ruin the finish by walking on it or have to sit there overnight while it dries.

Step 3. Sand Lightly

After the first coat dries, lightly sand it by hand. Tiny bubbles may appear after each coat dries due to small pieces of dirt or dust stuck in the surface of the wood. Sanding after the first coat will eliminate any bubbles or bumps. Wait for the finish to dry before sanding. Do not use steel wool for sanding on urethane finish because it will leave tiny fibers in the finish. Vacuum the floor after sanding and before the second coat.

Step 4. Apply Second Coat of Finish

Apply the second coat using the same technique. Make sure you coat the perimeter first with a paintbrush and then coat the rest of the room with an applicator pad.

Step 5. Lightly Sand and Apply Third Coat

Very lightly sand the second coat after it has dried. Wait at least six hours before applying the third coat. It is best to let the second coat dry overnight. Apply the third and final coat and let it dry completely without sanding it. Check the manufacturer's instructions on drying time before you put the furniture back in the room. Water-based finishes need about 40 hours before they can withstand normal traffic. Oil-based finishes usually take a little longer.

Step 6. Clean Up

Clean all the materials used when you are finished. When using oil-based polyurethane, the brushes and applicator pads must be cleaned off with mineral spirits (paint thinner). If you used a water-based finish, soap and water will be sufficient for cleaning the tools.