

Wood Floors

Solid hardwood floors lend warmth and character to any setting. While relatively easy to care for, the floors must be maintained properly to preserve their richness.

Damp-Mopping. Some professionals recommend damp mopping while others cringe at the suggestion. However, water can't hurt the floor's finish if it's in good shape and mopping is done correctly. Remember, you're cleaning the finish, not the wood, so don't use water if the finish is in poor shape.

Damp-mopping is the fastest and best way to deep-clean solid hardwood floors. Depending on how much use your floor gets, you may have to mop it as often as once a week. Wring the mop well -- so it's about half-dry -- and use a neutral pH wood cleaner with water or with a manufacturer recommended products. Though vinegar is often prescribed for cleaning hardwood floors, it does not remove grease or soil. If they are properly sealed, a little extra water, cleaner and heavy-duty mopping won't injure hardwood floors.

Maintenance Coat. If you can't restore a hardwood floor's luster with deep cleaning or simple buffing, consider applying a maintenance coat of wax. Waxing is an easy way to restore the wood's natural beauty. Though some experts don't recommend using wax over surface finishes, floor polish or wax can result in an attractive floor in minutes. However, only wax a surface finish if the original finish is in poor shape and you don't plan to completely refinish the floor soon.

Wax can be easily cleaned, buffed, stripped and reapplied to make the floor look like new. Normal wear and tear will take its toll on the wax rather than the floor's finish. Waxing may, however, limit future refinishing options. If not properly stripped, wax can cause adhesion problems when recoating the surface.

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