



Clean Like a Pro  
*Caring for Wood Floors*

It's a seemingly simple equation...  
Maintenance + Proper Cleaning = Decades of beautiful floors.

The first part of the equation, which consists of daily and weekly maintenance, is fairly straightforward. But it's the second part, the *proper cleaning*, where things get tricky. First, here is the National Wood Flooring Association's recommended program for wood floors:

### **Recommended Maintenance Schedule (5 Steps to Forever-Beautiful Wood Floors)**

<b>Step</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Type of Maintenance</b>
1	Daily	Sweep or dust mop
2	Weekly	Vacuum using a straight suction canister and a soft natural hair floor brush. If using an upright or power-assisted canister, use the bare floor setting. Stiff brushes at high rpm can damage some wood floor finishes.
3	Monthly	Clean using recommended wood floor cleaner. (In high traffic areas or kitchens, Kleenco recommends cleaning once or twice per week using the appropriate cleaner. Greasy or oily soils can penetrate urethane finishes permanently discoloring them).
4	Every 3-5 Years	Recoat with a sacrificial finish. (Such as Old Time Renew acrylic finish).
5	Every few decades	Sand and refinish as needed.

Step three is where most people run into problems. However, a little knowledge, provided by you to your customer, can prevent damaging results.

First, know this: when a wood floor is cleaned, there are two surfaces to think about. The first is the actual wood surface. The second is the finish applied to the top of the wood, which, ideally, should take the brunt of the cleaning. Common types of finishes are polyurethane, penetrating oil, varnish or shellac, and liquid or paste wax. Here's how to clean all of them.

## Surface Sealed Floors (Polyurethane)

If the floor was pre-finished by the manufacturer, most likely it had been coated with a UV-cured polyurethane. This method is popular, as polyurethane that is UV-cured can be recoated immediately. Multiple coats of this UV-cured polyurethane provides extremely durable finish with a long lasting shine.

Another type of polyurethane finish is "OMU", or oil modified urethane, also included in this category is moisture cured urethane, water based urethane and acrylic modified urethane. All of these urethane coatings have good wear characteristics, and are chemical, stain and water resistant. They are also the easiest to clean.

**Kleenco's Old Time Wood Floor Wash** has the proper mild acid content, chelators and surfactants to keep minerals and other tenacious soils from redepositing and dulling polyurethane-finished wood floors. It's free rinsing and leaves no film to attract soil or prevent refinishing. Formulated to the correct pH, Old Time Wood Wash preserves lignin the backbone of all wood floors.



Floors finished with a polyurethane can be cleaned with water based cleaning solutions. However, care must be taken to limit the amount of water used to clean a wood floor. Never use a dripping wet mop to clean any wood floor.

A good tool for cleaning wood floors is a Shine Mop or "Shmop". The Shmop has a terry cotton or microfiber cleaning pad that is affixed to plastic frame equipped with a flat rubber surface. The mop can be removed and dipped into cleaner to rinse away soil, then wrung dry and replaced onto the frame for continued damp mopping.

Another effective method is to dilute the Old Time Wood Wash (1 to 2 oz. per gallon) and then apply with a misting sprayer. The misted floor is then swept with a Shmop that had been slightly dampened with water. Any remaining moisture may be removed by mopping with a dry Shmop cover.

***On Polyurethane floors never use:***

- Abrasive Cleaners
- Alkaline Cleaners, including ammonia types
- Concentrated acids (undiluted or improperly diluted vinegar cleaners)
- Steam. Most wood floor manufacturers are striking steam from their maintenance recommendations. Peeling finish, whitening finish and cloudy finish are just some of the problems caused by steam cleaning wood floors.

(As an addendum, in areas with hard water or where well water is used the cleaner **should** be slightly acidic to dissolve any minerals present in the water as is **Old Time Wood Wash.**)

High alkaline cleaners can quickly damage a urethane coating, as can concentrated acids such as undiluted or improperly diluted vinegar. Vinegar will dissolve mineral-type soils however it cannot suspend or chelate the minerals. Over time the redepositing of this type of soil will dull the finish.

Neutral pH cleaners will not cause damage to polyurethane. However, they are unable to effectively dissolve mineral based soils. Because of this inherent weakness they will cause a wood floor to dull over time.

**Conversion Varnish**  
**(also known as Swedish Finish or acid-cured varnish)**

This finish (also technically a surface finish) can be cleaned in the same way urethane finished floors are cleaned. Follow the steps outlined above. Swedish finish is usually jobsite applied.

**Penetrating Oil Finish**

This category of floor finish contains many sub-categories, including penetrating oils (which absorb into the floor and leave no surface film), hard wax oils (which contain some wax to create build on the floor), and hybrid oils (such as Tung oil combined with urethane to form a durable film).

Traffic and time deplete the oils on a floor coated with a penetrating oil finish, causing the floor to look dull and lifeless. Floors finished with penetrating oils should be cleaned with a solution



designed to remove soils *and* replenish the oil. For this type of floor we recommend **Kleenco's Old Time Oil Soap**.

(Note: Oil Soap of any type should never be used on a polyurethane finished floor.)

**Old Time Oil Soap** is diluted in water prior to mopping an oiled wood floor and needs to be applied in a particular manner. Work with two buckets: one with the soap mix and the other with clean water for rinsing. Mop the soap mix onto the oiled floor, being careful to use a mop that has been wrung and is not over-saturated. After letting the soap sit briefly, mop using clean water, to rinse away the oil soap solution. After cleaning, let floors dry for at least 30 minutes before walking on them.

Floors that have little or no oil left in them can be refinished with a wood oil such as Tung or linseed oil. Flooring manufacturers can be consulted for the correct product and procedure to use for their particular product.

If your customer is unsure of the type of finish of their wood floor, it is safer to use Old Time Wood Wash. This product will not leave a film on the polyurethane, which will interfere with refinishing.

### Paste or Liquid Wax Base Finish



Old school finishes like wax are experiencing a comeback. Wood floor wax is made from carnauba wax, which is manufactured from the leaves of palm trees native to northern Brazil. Because wax has a low sheen as compared to polyurethane, it is popular with specialty wood flooring contractors and historic home renovators.

Water based cleaners cannot be used on floors finished with a liquid or paste wax. Water will turn the coating white. Soil needs to be removed by spray buffing, using a solvent based cleaner such as **Old Time Wood Floor Prepare**, along with a white polish pad.

**Care must be taken when using this process** as the solvent is **combustible** so the process must take place in a well-ventilated room, and all sources of ignition such as pilot lights must be turned off. ***Never use an airless or electric sprayer with any solvent base cleaner. Doing so will atomize the solvent, turning a combustible product into a high flammable air-solvent mixture.***

Once or twice per year, the wax coating should be stripped from the floor using Old Time Wood Floor Prepare and a steel wool pad. Once the floor is clean, re-apply a good quality liquid or paste wax.

## Shellac

Shellac is a natural product, produced from the resin made by the lac bug common to India and Thailand. Although not as durable as modern finishes, its popularity is growing because of its perceived “green” or environmentally friendly qualities. Shellac is almost never applied as a single stand-alone product. Generally, it is top-coated with a wax to increase its durability. Therefore, it is cleaned in the same manner as a floor coated with liquid or paste wax. Refer to the instructions above.

### Determining the finish type

(all testing should be conducted in inconspicuous area or an area easily hidden)

Now you know the most popular types of wood floor finishes. You also know how to properly clean them. But how do you determine which finish is on your floor?

The first way to determine the type of finish is the touch test. Simply touch your wood floors with your bare hand. Can you feel the grain? Does your hand feel slightly oily? Most likely your floors have been finished with a penetrating oil. To make sure it's a penetrating oil, place a small droplet of linseed oil on the floor. If it does not penetrate and remains as a droplet, you do not have a penetrating oil finish. It is some other type of finish.

To test for shellac, apply a small amount of acetone to the wood surface. If the acetone beads, it's probably polyurethane. If it doesn't bead, wait a few minutes. If it's shellac or varnish, the finish will become soft and tacky. Lacquer will dissolve completely.

To test for wax, apply a small amount of mineral spirits to the floor. Wait a few minutes and then wipe with a clean white cloth. Is there a yellow or brownish deposit? If yes, then you have a liquid or paste wax finish.

### Choosing the Right Cleaning Solution

Once the finish type is determined, cleaning is easy with **Kleenco's Old Time product line**.

- For polyurethane or other types of surface finished floors always choose **Old Time Wood Wash**.
- For penetrating oil finishes use **Old Time Oil Soap**.
- For paste or liquid wax finishes use **Old Time Wood Floor Prepare**.

## Additional Tips

Now that you know how to identify, maintain and clean wood floors, a few tips will stave off excessive re-coating and refinishing:

- If at all possible, remove your shoes at the front door. Shoes carry dirt and grime in from the outdoors. Especially damaging for wood floors is sand. Yes, the same sand that is used in sandpaper. You get the picture.
- Of all the types of shoes, the worst for wood floors is high heels. They may be high fashion, but the up to 8000 pounds of force they can apply to a wood floor can be extremely damaging.
- Cover your entrance and high wear areas with a breathable area rug or mat. Do not use rubber or plastic backed mats. These materials contain plasticizers that can penetrate wood finishes and permanently change the color of the floor.
- Wipe up any spills immediately. Soils left on the floor have a way of working into cracks and crevices making cleaning difficult or impossible.
- A small spray bottle of the appropriate Kleenco Old Time cleaner (diluted if indicated) is a good thing to keep close at hand for waging the everyday battle against spills and soil.
- Daily sweep with a microfiber dust mop or soft bristle broom.
- Do not use steam mops on wood floors.
- Do not use vacuums equipped with brush rolls or hard plastic wheels.
- Do not clean wood floors with harsh ingredients such as ammonia, bleach, alcohol, or undiluted or improperly diluted vinegar.

We hope that this information will help you to gain and keep grateful customers, who may be understandably confused by the mess of contradictory information they may have come across in the past. If utilized correctly, Kleenco products and their associated programs will keep wood floors consistently beautiful for a long time, and will make you your community's wood flooring expert.

Regards,

Dale R. Silbaugh  
President,  
Kleenco Products

