

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL SANDING AND FINISHING GUIDELINES

Part I - Job-Site Preparation

FOR SANDING SAFETY GUIDELINES, SEE APPENDIX F

NOTE: When sanding a previously finished floor, ascertain whether the floor finish contains lead. Floor finishes applied before 1978 may contain lead. Test kits are available to determine the presence of lead in floor finishes and other architectural coatings. Abide by local, state and federal guidelines for handling and disposal of lead-based products. For more information, visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website at www.epa.gov/lead.

- A. Redecorating, such as wall-coverings and painting, should be completed and dry before refinishing the floor or wait until sanding is completed and final finish is completely dry.
- B. Remove the base shoe, quarter round or baseboards as needed.
- C. Vacuum and/or sweep the floor clean before sanding and after every cut.
- D. Inspect the floor carefully — look for protruding nail heads or staples. Set nails as necessary. Repair and replace all damaged boards. **See Chapter 7.**
- E. Cover light fixtures. Warning: Covered lights may be a potential fire hazard; these fixtures should remain off. Tape switch in off position if necessary.
- F. Seal with plastic or appropriate dust blocker. Cover doorways, heat registers, returns, appliances, cabinets, fireplaces and windows in work area. Cover windows to keep out direct sunlight. Use the proper tape to hang plastic. **NOTE: Some tape will damage paint and wall coverings. Use a medium- or low-adhesion tape. Tape manufacturers recommend testing in an inconspicuous location before proceeding.**

PART II – General Sanding Guidelines

- A. The number of times a given floor can be sanded depends on the skill of the person sanding the floor, the type of equipment used, the thickness of the remaining wear-layer and the flatness of the floor. Refer to the flooring manufacturer's recommendation for guidelines on the number of times a floor can be sanded, and for any other recommendations.
- B. Measure wear-layer thickness in several areas and check for flatness to ensure whether you should attempt sanding. Measurements can often be made at floor registers or by removing transition moldings. Where there are sufficient gaps between T&G boards, a feeler gauge may be used to measure the thickness of the flooring down to the tongue. Caution: This method works well with solid wood flooring, but may not be accurate with some engineered flooring. Be aware that the wear layer on some engineered wood flooring may not be as deep as the tongue. Generally, if the wear thickness is less than 3/32", the floor should not be sanded.

- C. NOTE: When sanding eased- or beveled-edge flooring, appearance of bevels may not be consistent after sanding. In the case of a micro-bevel product, it is possible that the bevel will be eliminated.
- D. Load the professional sanding machine and edger with the proper sequence of sandpaper as shown in Appendix C and Appendix D.
- E. For specific instructions on sanding and finishing strip, plank and parquet flooring, see Chapters 2 and 3. For specific instructions on recoating an existing finished floor, see Chapter 4.



SAFETY NOTE: SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION IS A DANGER. Sanding dust is highly flammable. To minimize the risk, never operate the sanding machine when the bag is more than half full. Also, never leave the sanding machine with dust in the bag or any bag of dust in your vehicle or on the job site. For more information on Spontaneous Combustion, see Sanding Safety, Appendix F.

Part III – General Finishing Guidelines

- A. Inspect the floor carefully for all sanding errors. Repair all sander marks as necessary. After sanding is complete and all sander marks have been repaired, wipe or vacuum all dust on baseboards, windows, sills, doors and door frames. Clean from the highest surface to the lowest, in that order. Use a dampened cloth where appropriate on all surfaces except the bare wood floor.
- B. Inspect the floor for cracks and nail holes that may have been missed in the sanding phase. Spot fill cracks and nail holes with a commercial filler or putty that is compatible with stain and/or finish. When dry, hand-sand with the grain with the last abrasive used in the final sanding operation.
- C. Vacuum and tack the floor clean. Repeat tacking until floor is clean.
- D. If the floor is to be a natural finish, apply sealer followed by the appropriate finish. If other than a natural color is desired the floor must be stained or bleached. For bleaching refer to Chapter 5.
- E. NOTE: Most manufacturers of stains and finishes recommend using products from the same manufacturer to ensure compatibility and optimal adhesion. **BEFORE USING DIFFERENT MANUFACTURERS FOR THE STAIN AND FINISH PRODUCTS, CHECK WITH THE MANUFACTURER FOR COMPATIBILITY.**
- F. Apply the stain according to manufacturer's coverage rate, application method and procedures. The final sanding procedure and the species of the wood will determine the depth of color.
- G. Thoroughly wipe the stain from the floor. If the floor contains beveled edges, pay special attention to the beveled areas.
- H. Allow the stain to dry thoroughly, with proper air exchange and circulation. Use the finish manufacturer's recommended drying time. If the environment is excessively humid or cold the stain may take longer to dry. The stain must be completely dry before finishing begins. Be aware that some wood species may require more dry time for stain than the finish manufacturer recommends. Refer to the NWFA publication, *Wood Species Used in Wood Flooring* (A200) for more information on how various species react to stain and finish application.

- I. Apply sealer, if necessary, according to finish manufacturer's recommended coverage rate, application method and procedures. Refer to Applicator Recommendations in Appendix A.
 - 1. For a wax finish apply seal, then wax and buff or burnish into wood.
 - 2. For surface finishes, following intercoat abrasion, (see Appendix E) apply additional coats of finish according to manufacturer's recommendation
- J. Most surface finished floors can be walked on after 24-48 hours. Do not slide furniture on the floor. Lift it into place after 48 hours or as recommended by the finish manufacturer. Area rugs can be put down after the finish is fully cured, generally after 7 to 30 days, or as recommended by the finish manufacturer.
- K. Provide customers with information on proper maintenance practices to protect floor finishes. Furniture or rugs placed too soon may result in finish or surface damage. Some area rugs and padding may damage or discolor the finish. This type of damage as well as color change due to aging and UV sunlight is not the responsibility of the flooring contractor. In addition, soft plastic or fabric-faced floor protectors should be placed under the legs of furniture to prevent scuffing and scratching. To prevent scratching, walk-off mats both inside and outside doorways will help prevent grit, dirt and other debris from being tracked onto wood floors. For more information, see Wood Floor Maintenance, Appendix J.