

Help and advice



Alec Stacey on finishing

The best advice is to opt for a whole-in-one

FINISHING a timber floor should be a straightforward business, the floor is installed and the treatment selected and applied.

However, when a problem arises, particularly in commercial situations, the remedial treatment inevitably involves costly re-sanding of the whole floor before re-treatment.

When we produce specifications for architects, specifiers or even DIY users, we always include a maintenance regime which will not only preserve the quality of the finish but will render refurbishment less problematic.

However, the first and usually overriding factor of a specification will be the desired appearance and this will in part determine the choice of finish. Traditional oil finishes produce a warm, matt look, whilst lacquer treatments can produce shinier surfaces.

From a practical perspective traditional oil treatments require more maintenance in higher traffic areas, while in homes their use is best restricted to low traffic areas such as lounges and bedrooms.

As the appearance of floors in kitchens and hallways often deteriorates due to the client's lack of maintenance knowledge, a lacquer treatment is often a better approach for these areas when all that will be required is simple damp cleaning combined with regular sweeping and vacuuming.

In high traffic commercial areas however there are benefits from traditional oil finishes as, although the floors will deteriorate, they can be maintained and restored with minimal disturbance. Repairs can also be performed locally offering benefits in busy public buildings.

At Heathrow, over a 24 hour period, only six hours are available to clean and refurbish the flooring – an obvious problem if lacquer needs to dry and cure sufficiently to perform well.

In commercial areas a lacquer specification must maximise durability and this is achieved by the characteristics of the particular product and the number of coats applied. An important concern here is the coverage rate which, if extended, will result in the film 'build' from each coat being reduced, resulting in impaired performance.



In the majority of cases a primer should be used and failure to do so essentially wastes the first lacquer coat applied to the bare wood as most soaks into the timber producing little 'build'.

Sometimes the floor seal will wear prematurely when applied to highly textured timber. Often this is a result of skipping necessary abrasive grit sizes or by finishing the timber with over-course abrasives.

This leads to the initial

application of a water-based finish causing 'grainraising' which undermines the required film build from initial lacquer coats. In order to reduce this, the primer coat should be abraded to achieve the smoothest possible surface prior to lacquer application.

In high traffic areas, maintenance levels are an important factor and it's important that clients understand that most damage to timber floors is caused by abrasive particles tracked onto the floor from outside.

This can be minimised by the installation of effective barrier matting and by implementing a maintenance regime which cleans the floor but also allows the future re-application of lacquer coats.

This is achieved by using a refresher maintainer, such as Bona Freshen Up.

This type of polyurethane product restores a surface which has become dull through wear and also adds further protection to the floor seal.

If coats of lacquer are required these can be applied without sanding the floor back to bare timber. This is a useful approach

for museums and galleries where closure, disruption and dust from sanding all cause problems.

In summary, specifications should take a holistic view of the timber floor's life, rather than just the selection of a product. Details regarding the preparation of the floor should be included; for instance we recommend that in the majority of cases the final belt and edge sanding of the floor is made with 120 grit abrasives, followed by finishing sanding to produce a smooth homogenous surface.

A primer coat should be applied, and then abraded when dry. The appropriate number of lacquer coats should be stated with the correct coverage rates.

Instructions for the immediate aftercare of the floor are also important in addition to the implementation of an effective maintenance regime once the surface has fully cured. **CFJ**

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David Gatfield on a guide to adhesive use



Don't hang about when using 2-part adhesives

THE summer has finally arrived and, as you read this, I hope you are enjoying some glorious sunshine, rather than the wash out of last year.

Warmer weather also leads to a flood of questions and queries about two-part adhesives.

We recently got a call from a contractor in Manchester who was using the two-part system for the first time, installing thin rubber sheet onto our Everlay system, using an epoxy adhesive.

After fitting the sheet dry, he went to his van to get the adhesive.

As the van had been sitting in the sun all morning, the two-part adhesive was mixed and had firming up in the container, making it unusable.

Another contractor in North Wales was installing safety flooring in the conservatory of a residential home for the elderly. He was using a two-part polyurethane adhesive, which in many ways is more forgiving than a straight epoxy adhesive as under normal circumstances the cure is much slower.

He'd fitted the sheets of flooring, mixed and spread the adhesive and laid the flooring back down, then went for lunch.

When he got back he found hundreds of blisters in the flooring, which reappeared as fast as he pushed them out.

The blistering was caused by a number of issues – the subfloor was warm to the touch and the air temperature was too high, making the floor too soft and an escape route for excess adhesive.

So in view of these problems, I thought I'd write a brief guide for the use of two-part adhesives, whatever the weather:

- Never leave two-part adhesive in hot cars or vans.
- Never mix two-part adhesives until you are absolutely ready to get on your knees and start spreading.
- Get the adhesive out of the container and on to the floor as quickly as possible – this prolongs the curing time.
- Unless working with floor coverings which have honeycombed or recessed backing, never use a new trowel blade.
- Use smaller units as these mix more easily, and

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