

## ROUTINE MAINTENANCE FOR HARD SURFACES

### **Hardwood**

Sweep or vacuum the floor regularly to keep it clean and free of dust, sand and other abrasive materials. Place area rugs or doormats at entryways to help prevent sand grit, oils, dirt and other abrasive or staining materials from being tracked onto the floor surface from outdoors. (Avoid rubber-backed or similarly dense matting materials that may trap moisture between the mat and the floor; choose mats that enable airflow.) Place protective mats at high-use work areas such as sinks, ranges and workstations. Protect the floor from any exposure to liquids, water and other forms of moisture. Blot up any spilled food, drink or other liquid immediately. Never wet mop the floor when cleaning. Avoid walking on the floor with wet feet or footwear. Hardwood flooring will naturally undergo a change in color as it adjusts to the ambient light conditions of your home environment. The degree of color change varies by species. To ensure a uniform change, it is recommended that you do not place area rugs on the new floor for sixty days after installation. Thereafter, periodic re-arrangement of furniture and area rugs will help ensure that your flooring colors evenly. Put felt protector pads on the feet of all furniture and accessories that will be placed directly onto the floor surface. Avoid letting sharp or pointed objects come into contact with the floor surface. Do not walk on the floor with high heeled shoes, sports cleats, or other types of footwear which may damage the finish or cause indentations to the surface. Pets' nails will scratch and mark the floor surface. Keep pets' nails trimmed to minimize damage to the surface. Do not drag, push or roll appliances, furniture or any heavy object across the floor. Use heavy duty moving mats, dollies, or other moving aids to protect the floor surface.

Cleaning: Routine sweeping or vacuuming will keep the floor clear of most dust, grit and debris. For more thorough cleaning, use a wood floor cleaning solution approved for use with your hardwood flooring (available at Cascade Flooring America). Follow the product instructions. Do not use any household cleaners, oils, soaps, waxes or any abrasive materials or scouring agents on the floor. Do not use any wax or cleaner that must be mixed with water, such as oil soap, as this may ruin your floor. Failure to follow these floor care instructions may void your floor's warranty.

### **Ceramic Tile Floors**

Vacuuming or sweeping will remove most dirt from interior tile floors. Occasional damp mopping with clear water will remove most dirt that is tracked in. A neutral cleaner will break down grease and oil but should only be used if needed. All excess residue should be removed and rinsed with clear water. One of the most common problems people have is using a cleaner but not removing the cleaning solution from the floor.

Glazed tiles and most porcelain tiles will not absorb anything. Paint, nail polish and even most glue can be removed with the appropriate solvent without harming the tile—just clean off the solvent residue.

Some tiles can be damaged with acids, such as lemon juice. Use cleaning products that state they are acid-free and wipe up acidic spills immediately.

Cement-based grout will deteriorate from exposure to acids and some cleaners contain enough acid to damage grout with repeated use. Any cleaner that promises to remove mineral spots or even soap scum without scrubbing probably contains acid and will damage grout with repeated usage. If it does not say "acid-free", use with caution.

A few tiles are very rough, usually to give them increased slip resistance. Even though these tiles cannot be stained, dirt can get trapped in crevices and be difficult to remove by vacuuming or damp mopping. In these cases, a soft brush can be used with a neutral cleaner and water to loosen the dirt, which should then be removed with a sponge mop or wet/dry vacuum.

### **Counters**

Kitchen counters get oil, mild acids and every color of staining material imaginable on a daily basis, so picking a good tile, grout and sealer, as well as getting a good installation are very important. The larger the tile and the smaller the grout joint, the easier it will be to keep a counter looking like new. Medium colors and a little texture are also easier to keep looking good, dark shiny tiles will show streaks. Finally, white grout will almost certainly discolor over time in a kitchen, a little color will make your life easier. If you follow these simple rules you can have tile counters that are not only beautiful and long lasting, but easy to maintain as well.

Floor rated tiles are recommended for kitchen counters because they are impact and scratch resistant. Avoid rough textures—they will make cleaning more difficult. With good tile and small sealed grout joints, a clean dishrag will clean off nearly anything. Use soap for greasy spills and then rinse out the dishrag and remove the residue. Dark tiles will require a

pass with a dry towel to remove water streaks. After preparing meat, fish or poultry, it's good to use a highly diluted bleach solution to kill bacteria on counters and breadboards. When you see grout joints begin to darken when they get wet, it's time to re-seal them. With a good sealer, once very few months will be as often as needed.

### **Walls**

After showering, rinse off the walls with clear water. Soap scum and body oils will rinse off easily before they dry but will be hard to clean if they build up. Occasional cleaning with a neutral cleaner will keep things looking good with minimal effort. The best way to prevent mold and mildew is to use an exhaust fan during and after showers and keep shower doors open. With constant heat and moisture, mold will grow on anything, but good ventilation and a fairly simple cleaning schedule will usually keep it from being a problem. Sealing the grout will help keep mold out and occasional bleach-based cleaners can be used, but repeated use of bleach will also lead to grout damage over time. Using exhaust fans will also help prevent mold growing in other places, including your attic and in your walls, so make them a priority and make your life easier.

### **Laminate**

Sweeping and an occasional cleaning with a dusting mop, using the manufacturer's recommended cleaner, is all you need to do. Never allow the floor to stay wet; slight moisture with a recommended cleaning product is all you will ever need. Do not use soap-based detergents, as they may leave a dull finish on your floor. Laminate flooring, like other smooth floors, can become slippery when damp. Allow time for floors to dry after cleaning. Immediately wipe up wet areas from spills, foreign substances, or wet feet.

### **Vinyl**

Sweep your floor regularly to remove loose dirt. Prevent stains by wiping spills promptly. Occasionally damp mop the floor with the manufacturer's recommended cleaner to remove dirt build-up. As a substitute, 2-3 capfuls of clear, non-sudsy ammonia in one gallon of water may be used. Using more than the recommended amount of cleaner may leave a dull film. See your sales professional for more information.

### **General Tips to Keep Your Flooring In Shape**

You will love the look your new hard surface flooring gives your home. With a few easy precautions, you can enjoy that beautiful look for years. Here are some helpful tips to keep your floors as handsome as the day you installed them.

#### **Keep Doormats at Every Door**

Use quality doormats outside each entrance to your home to prevent dirt, sand, grit, and other substances such as oil, asphalt, and driveway sealer from being tracked onto your floor. Beware of mats that could stain your flooring by verifying that the mat is recommended for your specific use.

#### **Take Special Precautions with Heavy Objects**

Support furniture or other heavy objects with wide-bearing, non-staining floor protectors or wide-bearing leg bases/rollers. When moving heavy furniture or appliances, put down a clean sheet of quarter-inch high plywood or masonite and use a dolly with wide-base air tires. Never try to slide or roll heavy objects across the floor without adequate protection. Some objects may be too heavy to be moved across a hard surface floor without damaging it.

#### **Close Curtains and Blinds**

Close your curtains or blinds where extreme sunlight hits the floor. A combination of heat and sunlight causes most home furnishings and solid surface flooring to fade or discolor.

#### **Routinely Clean Your Floor**

Routine care and maintenance are essential to maximizing the beauty and life of your flooring. Over time, normal foot traffic and soiling will cause a change in any floor's appearance. Vacuum (with a beater-bar), dust, mop, or sweep the floor on a daily or weekly basis to minimize abrasive grit and dirt. In very sandy areas or at the beach, you may want to vacuum or sweep more frequently. When using a liquid cleaner, be sure to dry it thoroughly to avoid a film. Read and follow the manufacturer's directions for care and cleaning and for recommended products. Blot up spills and spots immediately, beginning at the outer edge and working toward the center to prevent the spill from spreading.

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