

7 Wood Floor Refinishing **Myths** ...revealed

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You may have heard things about refinishing hardwood floors throughout the years that you've been wondering about. Here are a few myths revealed...

I can refinish my own floors

Sure, you probably can, people across the country are renting machines and doing it every day. It all depends on what quality you are looking to achieve with your valuable hardwood floors vs. how much time and money you want to spend getting there. Before you make this decision you should consider the following...

Your only option is to rent equipment, unless of course you're friends with a professional floor refinisher.

Rental floor sanding equipment comes with many issues.

- First of all, you generally can't rent the high quality, powerful sanding equipment used by professionals.
- Equipment maintenance... What's that? - Rental companies have way too many other tools and equipment to make money on. They're not going to spend time maintaining that drum sander or edger. Professional wood floor refinishers are constantly performing ongoing maintenance to make sure the machinery performs properly on every floor.
- You'll pay inflated prices for sandpaper. Typical home improvement type stores usually don't sell sandpaper for floor sanding equipment. Guess who does though, your local equipment rental company. They know you have to buy sandpaper for their machines from them, so guess what – you pay premium for it! They probably make more money off selling you sandpaper than actually renting the machinery.

Ask any professional wood floor refinisher if they will sand your floors with rental equipment. Every one of them will say no. If someone says they will use rental equipment to sand your floors, you should run the other way! It takes expensive, high quality equipment and many years honing your skills to produce a high quality finished hardwood floor. This is just the truth of the matter.

You can only imagine the results of a refinishing project using rental equipment in the hands of a “rookie” floor sander. Irreversible damage can happen very quickly. Some folks get brave and commence sanding their floors – and actually have pretty decent results. Problem is, they may be completely unaware that they just decreased the life of the floor significantly. A wood floor can only withstand being sanded so many times – usually 4-6. A pro will carefully sand off only the minimum wood required to remove all the old finish and achieve a flat and smooth floor. If you don't know how to do this, you may be costing yourself lots of money in the long run.

Say you do actually get the floor down to bare wood, what now? You need to apply some sort of sealer

or stain. Here's where I mention that staining a floor properly (and achieving a quality job) is another discussion on it's own. It takes a great deal of meticulous sanding and handwork to prepare wood floors for stain, or else every little imperfection will be highlighted. Sure, you can get sealers and stain down at your local home improvement store. They're usually pretty easy to apply too, but keep in mind that industrial finishing products used by pros just aren't available to the public. Professional finish products are difficult to apply and can yield undesirable results when not used properly. Finish manufacturer's would have a field day dealing with customer complaints – so they just don't sell their products to the public.

You've also got to take into account the time it will require you to complete this job. Do you have a family that will be inconvenienced or displaced during the process? Wouldn't you want it to go as quickly as possible? What about your job – are you going to need to take precious time off work, just to work *on your floors* and potentially end up with a flawed floor that you'll be reminded of every time you glance down. This is certainly something to consider!

For example, let's say you took a week off work, you've got some friends willing to help stuff all your furniture in the garage, and your family is staying with someone else while this goes on because you're refinishing the bedrooms too. You've gone to rent the equipment and start sanding, and actually make some good headway. Back to the rental place the next day for more paper. By the third day you've got the floor looking pretty good and decide to start staining because dark stain colors are trendy right now. Don't forget to buy a respirator, rubber gloves, blue painter's tape, mineral spirits, and lots of rags. Don't ever pile stain rags up, they can spontaneously combust – seriously! Here's where you start seeing problems, you've got some parts of the floor that look smooth and others that look rough. There are scratches showing all over the place and 8” marks in the floor where you started and stopped the drum sander. Problem is, you couldn't see all these sanding imperfections until the stain was applied and wipes off.

Now what? Keep going and live with it or call a professional to fix it?

There is a lot of dust involved in wood floor sanding

In the past, this statement was certainly true. Thanks to modern day advances in dust containment systems, the dusty mess involved in refinishing hardwood floors is significantly reduced. In fact, installing a hardwood floor can create quite a bit more dust than sanding one!

High powered vacuum systems can be utilized on multiple machines to contain dust, while other machines incorporate very effective built in systems.

I should be waxing my floors regularly

The days of waxing hardwood floors are over. With present day floor finishes, waxing is not necessary and can actually create a hazardous situation by making the floor to slippery. In some cases waxing can void a finish manufacturer's warranty.

The only time a floor should be waxed is if it has been waxed for many years. In these cases, waxing is the only option, short of completely sanding the floor and refinishing with a no-wax polyurethane.

Wax can also make a re-coat virtually impossible if you ever choose that option. This is because new finish will not adhere to wax. It is very difficult, if not impossible to remove years of wax without

sanding the entire floor down to bare wood.

It's cheaper to just cover my hardwoods up with carpet

For the short term this is true, but in the long run this certainly isn't the case. Consider that the average lifespan of carpet and padding is 10 years, and a hardwood floor can last well over 100 years!

If you hire a professional hardwood floor refinisher you shouldn't need to refinish your floors again for 20-30 years. Sometimes a refinish can last longer, depending on how well the floors are kept. If a wood floor just needs a little "sprucing up", it can be re-coated, which is much cheaper and less invasive than a complete refinish.

Most of the time carpeting needs to be professionally cleaned every 1-2 years depending on usage, this is not the case with hardwood floors. Hardwoods only require regular vacuuming, dust mopping & damp mopping to keep them clean. For heavier foot traffic, a professional wood floor cleaning may only be needed every 5-10 years.

Hardwood floors hold much more value in a home than carpeting, and provide a healthier environment in your home. Your home value and personal health are certainly worth investing in!

While refinishing a floor can be more expensive initially than the cost of installing carpet, it's a sound investment over the lifespan of a hardwood floor.

Nobody knows how to repair my old wood floors anymore

This one surprises us every time, and fortunately it's not true! It may be difficult to locate the most competent company to perform repairs on your hardwood floors, but there are still some of us left.

Whether your floors are damaged from water, termites, animal accidents, or have areas of the floor missing for one reason or another, there is a way to repair them. There can be many factors involved that must be addressed in order to achieve a successful repair, this is why an experienced wood floor specialist is who you should be seeking.

There are many different species, grades, and ages of wood floors out there. If performed properly with the right materials, most repair jobs should barely be noticeable, if at all.

More finish on the floor is better

This simply isn't the case. High quality wood flooring finishes generally require 2 coats, and in some instances a 3rd coat may be needed. In fact, too much polyurethane on a floor can begin to make it look plastic or fake.

Once the penetrating sealer or stain coat is applied, polyurethane should be applied in multiple thin coats to ensure proper drying and long-lasting adhesion and protection. The optimum amount of finish will also allow the beauty of the wood grain to show through.

We have been fortunate enough to go back on floors we refinished 20, 30, and even 50+ years ago. This has allowed us to truly see what finish system works and what doesn't. Some of these floors that had 1

coat of sealer + 2 coats of polyurethane needed nothing more than a good cleaning and re-coat. With the advances in flooring finishes over the past 20 years, there are many high quality products available. These products will only be offered through your wood flooring professional. The finishes you find in big-box stores are designed to be applied easily with decent results, but are not going to hold up as well as professional finishes, which are difficult to apply properly.

It only takes a day or two to refinish hardwood floors

We often get calls from folks that expect us to completely refinish their floors in a day or two, starting tomorrow. Most of the time....this just isn't the case.

The only process that can be completed in that short amount of time is a “screen & re-coat”. This process doesn't involve sanding. Instead the floor will be cleaned, abraded, and the a new coat of polyurethane will be applied. This process can be confused with a “refinish”, which involves completely sanding the floor down to bare wood and applying new finish.

Most floors we encounter require a complete sanding and refinishing for one reason or another. On our end, this process generally takes between 3-5 days to complete. You also have to factor in time to completely move out of the areas to be refinished and finish cure times before moving back in once the final coat is applied, which is generally 5-7 days for waterborne finishes.