

Sanding and Refinishing Hardwood Floors

By Janice Howell, vice president of MODA Floors & Interiors,
www.modafloorsandinteriors.com

MODA Floors & Interiors is a flooring and window coverings resource in the West Midtown Design District.

Hardwood floors can add warmth, style, and value to your home. But like many fine things, hardwood floors need an occasional touch-up to retain their beauty. Except in cases of severe damage, these floors can be sanded and refinished rather than replaced, not just once but multiple times over the years. This process removes a thin layer of wood containing polyurethane and stain, ridding the wood of scratches, marks, and discoloration. The newly exposed wood can then be restained and restored to its original luster. Sanding and refinishing can also be done on hardwood floors in otherwise good condition simply to change the color.

Quality hardwood floors can last a hundred years or more, with periodic maintenance and prompt attention to any significant damage. Water damage is one of the main threats. However, professionally operated drying systems can often restore the wood to its natural state. "Cupping" may occur if the water stands on the floor for too long, but if the cupping is less than 1/16th of an inch, the flooring can often be sanded and refinished. When the damage is more severe, it may be possible to remove and replace only the damaged wood. The remainder of the wood in that room or adjoining rooms can then be restained to match the replaced section.

Sanding and refinishing is best done by a qualified contractor, although do-it-yourselfers may be tempted to rent the equipment to tackle the job themselves. Protect the beauty and durability of your hardwood flooring by hiring a professional who knows the right tools, techniques, and materials for each job. But as with any home improvement project, select the contractor carefully. Skill and professionalism can vary considerably, so get referrals and ask questions that may help you judge a person's capability. For instance, does the contractor use dust containment equipment, which results in a significantly cleaner worksite? Ask for a description of the sanding technique—will the contractor sand the floor more than once, as is recommended, using varying grids of paper each time? Does the contractor seem qualified to properly operate the heavy sanding equipment without damaging the wood? Also find out if the contractor uses branded stains and polyurethanes such as Bona or Dura Seal.

You can sand prefinished engineered wood flooring if the wood has a thick enough wear layer. A better alternative may be to clean, buff, and recoat the wood. Traditional hardwood floors can also be recoated to remove surface marks, although this process will not remove deep scratches or allow you to change the wood's color. However, recoating the wood every five years or so extends the time between resands.

A properly maintained wood floor will give you many years of enjoyment.

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