

KNOW YOUR FLOORS

Procedures:

The maintenance of floors would be simplified if only one substance and one procedure for cleaning all floors could be prescribed. Following is a list of the different types of floors that you will encounter and facts you should know about each.

1. **Asphalt Tile:** Asphalt tile is a mixture of asbestos fibers, limerock and earth fillers and colored pigments with an asphalt or resin binder. The tile is very brittle and, like linoleum, is bonded to the floor with mastic, either directly or over a layer of felt. Sometimes a plywood sub-flooring is used to provide a smooth surface. Solvents and oils attack asphalt causing it to break down; therefore, never use solvent type liquid waxes and cleaners and solvent paste wax. Use a water emulsion resin finish. Oils and greases are also enemies of asphalt, so oily dust mops and oily sweeping compounds should be avoided. When cleaning asphalt floors, always use a mild synthetic detergent.

2. **Rubber Tile:** Rubber tile is composed of rubber which is colored mineral pigments and sometimes contains asbestos fibers. Rubber tile is seriously affected by oils, solvents, strong soaps and alkali. It has a dense, smooth surface which resists abrasions, stains, acid and mild alkali. It is durable and anti-slip. Air and sunlight are natural enemies of rubber floors. Sunlight can remove the gloss of the floor and cause "chalking" and surface checking, while air causes rubber to dry out, check and crack. Finishing the floor will help prevent that problem.

3. **Vinyl and Vinyl Asbestos:** Essentially, vinyl tile is a compound of inert non-flammable, odorless non-toxic resins having a thermal plastic quality which is compounded in other filler and stabilizing ingredients. Vinyl asbestos is comparable to asphalt tile except that vinyl type resins are used as a binder instead of asphalt. Both of these minerals are resistant to water, acid, alkali, grease and oil. They can be damaged by seepage or water between the tiles which loosens them from the sub-flooring. New vinyl and vinyl asbestos floors are coated with a silicone which resists wetting. These floors need dry buffing with a synthetic fiber scrubbing pad to remove surface silicones or complete stripping before applying your floor finish.

4. **Linoleum:** Linoleum is a mixture of linseed oil, resins and ground cork pressed upon a burlap backing or a mixture of wood fibers, linseed oils and resins attached to a felt backing. Both the backing and the adhesives that bind the linoleum to the sub-floor are susceptible to water damage. Water seeps around the edges or through the cracks and attacks the backing, loosening the linoleum from the floor. This results in curling of edges and eventual destruction of the floor's surface. Therefore, keep the use of water on linoleum to an absolute minimum. Flooding the surface with water is positively prohibited!! Linoleum is also highly susceptible to alkali damage. Alkali will remove the linseed oil binder, drying out the floor causing it to become brittle and crack.

NON-RESILIENT TILE FLOORS

1. **Terrazzo:** Terrazzo is made of marble chips set in a mixture of portland cement. The floor surface is highly polished and is easy to clean. A terrazzo sealer protects the floor from penetration by spillage and from wear by foot traffic. Strong soaps and scouring powders are harmful to terrazzo. Powder cleaners which do not fully dissolve in water will get under the marble chips and pop them from the floor. Acid cleaners used on terrazzo will attack the portland cement, dissolving that and leaving the floor pitted.

2. **Marble and Travertine:** Marble and travertine are natural stone materials that have been polished and laid to form a floor. Strong soaps and cleaners enlarge the pores of this stone and cause it to absorb dirt. Never use scouring powder on marble surfaces. The same can be said about powdered floor cleaners. Floor finishes can be used on the marble floors; however, care should be taken to maintain the floor finishes so as to prevent unnecessary stripping as the high alkaline strippers will damage marble surfaces.

3. **Ceramic Tile and Quarry Tile:** Ceramic tile is composed of clay mixed with water and fired in a kiln whereas quarry is a natural stone. Both ceramic tile and quarry tile provide a smooth and pervious surface which is not damaged by plain water. Avoid cleaners that will eat away the concrete grouting surrounding the tile. If a finish is used on ceramic tile, thin coats should always be applied and usually no more than two coats are needed.

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