

Introduction to Floor Stripping

Background:

The process of stripping finish from all of the different floor surfaces found in the marketplace today is generally thought of as to one of the most difficult jobs for a custodian to do.

In the "OLD DAYS" custodial staff used to use almost straight ammonia to strip floors. The thought was that stripping solutions had to smell real strong in order to work. Can you imagine working in that atmosphere? Thank goodness for the modern technologies and new formulations.

Not only is the stripping process thought of as being difficult, it is also the most expensive.

North American studies indicate the labor costs as much as 90% of every dollar budgeted and that the stripping procedure is by far the most labor intensive.

At Swish, we offer our simple statement for success: "DO IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME". Planning to strip a floor requires a few steps to be followed before starting to help ensure an excellent end result.

Procedures:

1. Preparation:

Health & Safety First: Read the Material Safety Data Sheets and know what to do in case of an accident or spill. Gather enough wet floor signs to block off all of the exits surrounding the work area. Remember that "you" can be held responsible if anyone including the strip crew slips & falls.

Read the manufacturer's procedures and instructions for dilutions and dwell times, etc. for the best results. Always follow correct dilution guidelines. Measure precisely... "GLUG...GLUG" is not accurate and can cost you a lot more time and money in the long run.

2. Tools Required:

Having all of the necessary equipment to complete the job is critical. Here is a list of some of the equipment you will require:

- a) **Rotary swing machine (s)** complete with a pad holders & splashguard.
- b) **Automatic floor scrubber** (depending on size of area to be stripped)
- c) **Wet vacuum** with floor wand & pick-up tool or front mounted squeegee attachment.
- d) **Extension cords**, you can never have too many.
- e) **Black floor pads or High Productivity stripping pads**
- f) **Dust mop, broom, dust pan and scrub sponges**
- g) **Mop bucket(s) and wringers** to match
- h) **Wet mops & handles** for applying stripping solution.
- i) **Wet mops & handles** for rinsing floors before applying finish.
- j) **Special Wet "Finish" mops** for applying floor finish.
- k) **Wet Floor signs**
- l) **Garbage bags** (to line the mop bucket) and place wet mops in after use.
- m) **Putty knife and/or scrapers** (for edges, gum removal and stubborn stains).
- n) **Masking tape** (for protecting adjoining carpet or other surfaces from damage)
- o) **Doodlebug Pad holder(s)** for stripping edges close to cabinet's and walls.
- p) **Black Doodlebug stripping pads or High Productivity pads.**
- q) **Small bucket(s) and cloths** to wipe down baseboards, shelf facings, doors, etc.
- r) **Cardboard**, to place wet equipment & supplies on after use preventing damage.
- s) **Stripping Solution**, It is better to have more on hand than less & running out.
- t) **Floor Sealer**, For "BEST" results, apply 2-3 coats for an excellent foundation.
- u) **Floor Finish**, Apply 3-5 coats for "BEST" results.
- v) **Electric Blower Fan** (for humid conditions to speed dry time)

**** Tip Of The Trade ****

Know where the circuit breakers are in the building because will usually trip one! This saves critical time searching for them while in the actual process. **Always fully charge all powered equipment prior to use. This will ensure longer run time.**

Step by Step Stripping Procedures

1. **Always dust mop the floor surface** prior to applying stripping solution. This removes the dirt and debris and prevents it from being ground into the floor when using a rotary swing machine.
2. **Place wet floor signs around the area** to be stripped ensuring 100% awareness and safety for the general public or unexpected visitors.
3. **Liberal apply and flood** the floor with stripping solution.
4. **Allow a minimum of a 10 minute dwell time** (wet time) for solution to work and soften the floor finish. Never allow the stripping solution to dry back.
5. **Agitate and scrub the floor surface using the rotary swing machine with a black or High Productivity stripping pad.** For best results, ensure you operate the machine slowly, ensuring that you overlap your passes. This ensures 100% floor coverage and removal of all of the old finish. ** Remember, it is better to take a little more time scrubbing and stripping the floor then to rush it and have to repeat your steps**.
6. **Use the doodlebug pad holder with a black pad** to strip the edges near the walls, baseboards and furniture where the rotary swing machine will not get close to.
7. **Rinse the floor using cool, clean water and a new mop.** A mop that has "NOT" been used in stripping solutions previously may also be used. However, if there was a remote chance that the mop may have been used to apply stripping solution before, we recommend not using it to prevent cross-contamination and floor finish adhesion. **Your final rinse is critical to your success!** If you rinse the floor right, you will not have any problems. If you skip this procedure, you are guaranteed premature failure of the finish and poor results.

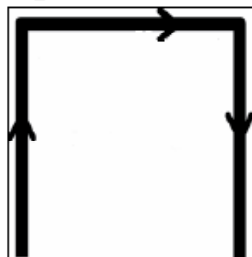
After rinsing the floor, allow it to dry and check the floor surface for any white film residue. The way to check for this is to wipe your hand along the floor surface and observe for any powder left on the under side of you hand. If a white powdery residue is present, then you must rinse the floor again. Ensure you replace the rinse water with clean water before doing so. The habit of rinsing the floors twice will be an advantage in presenting a top-notch shine.

8. **Line your mop bucket with a new garbage bag** to prevent cross-contamination. For as little as a few pennies for a garbage bag, you have a bucket that is just like brand new. There is no chance for contamination of previously used detergents or strippers to mix with and effect the performance of the new sealer or finish.
9. **Place your finish mop in the bottom of the bucket.** Slowly pour the sealer over the mop head covering the mop. Pouring slowly reduces the amount of bubbles in the sealer. This allows the sealer to level better and produce a smoother surface coating.

We recommend **2 thin to medium coats of sealer** for an excellent base and foundation of any deep-stripped floor.

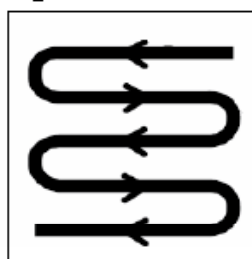
Apply sealer to areas around 20' x 20' at one time. Start in a corner keeping about 6 inches away from the edges and frame in your area to be sealed. Using a "U" pattern, frame in three sides of the area then fill in the middle using a figure eight pattern. (See Drawing) Allow 20 – 30 minutes to dry before applying another coat. Thin to medium coats are better for longer life, more gloss, smoother coating and the best adhesion possible. Never apply thick coats. They do not dry as well or provide as good of an adhesion.

Step #1



Bordering Sealer
Keep 6" away from edges

Step #2



Fill in middle using a
Figure Eight Pattern

Step by Step Stripping Procedures

10. After applying two coats of sealer, **check the surface for proper dry time**. This can be done by rubbing your fingers across the floor checking for wet spots, smudging and wet sections. Your fingers should slide relatively easy across the surface without leaving a mark behind. If it shows signs of any marking, you **MUST** allow the sealer to dry longer. You will be amazed as to what drying effect as little as five minutes has on a floor sealer. Visual checks and walking cautiously on the floor is another way to check for dryness.

The room temperature and air flow throughout the room have a direct relationship as to how fast sealer dries. If you use an electric whistle fan, do not aim it directly at the floor surface. This will prematurely dry the floor creating poor adhesion and cause ripples on the surface.

11. After applying the sealer, you are ready to apply the final coats of floor finish. This is done in the same fashion as the sealer but be sure to start in another area of the room on each coat. This will prevent shiny spots and patches and automatically provide more even applications.

12. **We recommend two coats of sealer and three to five coats of finish on a new or deep-stripped floor**. Keep in mind that a single piece of paper is equivalent to approximately eight coats of finish. The secret to finish is "film thickness". You need a good base to work with and repair to ensure the "BEST RESULTS". You may only have time to apply five coats at one time before you have to return the floors to duty. Do not sweat this situation. This is OK. You can always give the floor a thoroughly cleaning the next day and apply the required number of extra coats to bring up your count.

13. **Ensure that you lock up or close off the entrances to the freshly re-finished area. You cannot post enough warning signs**. We have witnessed many situations in the past where people have not done this and had a fresh finished floor ruined by someone assuming it was dry and walking on it.

TOOL CLEAN-UP:

It is most important to clean-up all of you equipment and tool used during the stripping and re-finishing procedures. Not only does it provide a fresh-start, clean image to the work crew, it will prolong the life of the equipment and project a professional image to your customers walking throughout the building during the operation.

"CLEANLINESS BREEDS CLEANLINESS"

Some Hints on Stripping

Always use cold water. You want the active ingredients on the floor doing the work not in the air where you can smell them.

Never let your stripper dry on the floor. "Dry Back" necessitates stripping again and can sometimes be as tough a job as stripping in the first place.

Use a wet/dry vacuum to pick up the solution instead of a mop. You'll have much less residue and eliminate the need of at least one rinse step. If you don't own a wet/dry vacuum, rent one. It will more than pay for itself in time-savings and effort.

On rubber or asphalt tile, **test a small area first**. Most strippers are not for use on linoleum as they will bleed the colour out of the floor.