

Floor Care Glossary

"A"

Acrylic – Type of polymer used in floor finishes. Also, a man-made synthetic fiber used in spun yarn to resemble wool in carpet.

Active Ingredients – The ingredients in a product that are specifically designed to achieve the product performance objectives.

Adhesion – A necessary characteristic of a floor finish, which causes it to bond to the floor rather than peel, flake or powder.

Alkali – A chemical substance with a pH higher than 7. Alkalis ensure that pH is maintained at a desirably high level during cleaning. Sodium hydroxide and sodium metasilicate are strong alkalis, which not only maintain a high pH, but also play a primary role in removing solid grease. Sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) provides alkalinity at a somewhat lower pH. It is useful for buffering formulations, which will contact the skin, and for other uses where mildness is important. Silicates perform additional useful functions. They provide corrosion protection, particularly on "white" metals like aluminum.

Alkaline Residue – Unsightly film left on floor surface after stripping. A white powdery film which can best be observed by running your hand across the floor surface.

Alkalinity – Useful in removing acidic, fatty and oily soils. Detergent products can be formulated at any level of alkalinity to meet cleaning performance requirements. Quality of being alkaline.

Ammonia – An alkaline gas composed of nitrogen and hydrogen. 5% to 10% solutions of ammonia in water are sold as household ammonia.

Antifoaming Agents – Antifoaming agents are necessary in floor coatings to reduce and eliminate bubbles and foam when the finishes are applied. Bubbles and foam interfere with continuous film formation and can cause cratering when the bubbles break during the drying process.

Asbestos – A non-flammable mineral fiber that was once used extensively in some floor tiles especially vinyl asbestos tile (VAT) and asphalt tile. Its use is limited because asbestos is known to be a carcinogen.

Asphalt Tile – A floor tile manufactured with a mixture of synthetic fibers, lime, rock, mineral filler and coloring. Asphalt is used to bind the materials together.

ASTM – American Society for Testing and Materials.

Automatic Scrubber – A battery or electric cord powered floor machine that dispenses cleaning solution, scrubs the floor, and then recovers the solution using a vacuum. All of this can be done in one pass. They are also known as automatics or walk behinds.

"B"

Black Heel Marks – Black heel marks are caused by footwear or equipment leaving a dark mark on the floor.

Bleeding – Removing or dispersion of color from carpet or other floor tile material by a liquid. Floor tile (particularly asphalt) can bleed from an excessive concentration of stripper solution.

Blushing – A film defect appearing as a milky opalescence that sometimes appears as the floor finish dries. It is caused as the rapid solvent evaporation cools the surface and moisture from the air condenses on the wet coating. This condition is commonly encountered when air flow is poor and humidity is high. This same condition can occur when coats are rushed and applied before the prior finish coat is completely dry.

Buffer – Any substance in a fluid which tends to resist a change in pH when acid or alkali is added. Also a slang term for a floor buffing and scrubbing machine.

Burnish – To polish or make shiny. To develop a smooth, lustrous surface finish by rubbing with a floor pad or brush.

Burnishing – A maintenance method used to produce a gloss with functional heat and vigorous mechanical action. (i.e. floor pads under a high speed floor machine).

"C"

Carnauba – A natural wax from the leaves of the carnauba palm in Brazil. A polishing wax used in car wax and some floor waxes for wood floors.

Ceramic Tile – Clay tile with an impervious, usually glossy, layer on the surface.

Coalescing Agents – These are ingredients added to floor coatings to assist in the film formation. Once the water evaporates from the coating, the coalescing agents remain and evaporate slowly allowing the polymers, resins, waxes and acrylics to form a continuous and durable film.

Conductive Flooring – A special type of floor or floor covering that allows static electricity charges to drain away easily. Some types also prevent static charge from building up.

Coverage – The amount of product that is required to coat or treat a specific area. Usually expressed in square feet per gallon (sq.ft./gallon).

Crazing – A small irregular cracking or breakup in a floor finish film or coating after it has dried on a surface. Powdering, dulling and walk off of the finish can result. **Curing** – A chemical aging process that allows floor finishes to bond and harden.

"D"

Damp Mopping – Mopping with a mop wrung out tightly in a cleaning solution containing mild detergent, disinfectant or sanitizing agent.

Defoamer – Substance used to reduce or eliminate foam.

Detergency – Is the action of removing soil by actually lifting it from the surface and distributing it as suspended particles throughout the cleaner.

Discoloration – The tendency of a floor finish to turn yellow or darken with age or successive coats. Many times this is caused by embedded dirt.

Dynamic Coefficient of Friction – The ratio of the force required to keep an object moving to the weight of the object.

"E"

Etch – A chemically caused change on the outside of a smooth floor surface which causes the floor to be pitted or rough.

"F"

Factory Finish – A temporary finish applied to a floor covering by the manufacturer. This finish provides protection during manufacture, transportation, storage and installation. The factory finish must be removed prior to application of a floor sealer or finish.

Fish Eyes – Small circles that appear in a floor finish after it has dried. Can be caused by too much agitation during application or by applying too heavy a coat of finish.

"G"

Gloss – The property of a surface involving specular reflection responsible for lustrous or mirror- like appearance. Measured with a gloss meter usually at a 60-degree angle.

Gloss meter - An instrument for measuring gloss.

"H"

Healing – Technique of applying pressure to the edge of a floor machine and pad to remove black shoe marks.

Humidity – A measure of moisture in the atmosphere.

"J"

James Machine – Gives very precise, reproducible readings of the static coefficient of friction between typical shoe leather and coated floor panels. The Canadian Government Standards Board (CGSB) establishes the figure of 0.5 on the James Machine as the minimum reading for floor finishes. Reading above this level pass, readings below fail.

"L"

Leveling Agent – Substance added to a floor coating which allows it to flow evenly in application and to help prevent "puddling".

"M"

Metal Interlock – The use of metal molecule in the chemical structure of polymers to provide resistance to detergents or floor polishes made from these polymers. (Usually zinc).

Mop Drag – A resistance between the mop and a floor finish during application.

MSDS – Material Safety Data Sheet. A document produced by the manufacturer of a chemical product that explains the hazards associated with the product.

"N"

Neutral – A chemical state that is neither acid nor alkali (base); 7 on the pH scale.

Neutralizer – Chemical to change the pH of a surface so that residues will no longer interfere with floor coating adhesion.

Non-Volatile Solids – Refers to the actual amount, expressed in percentage, of a floor finish product that remains on the floor after the drying process.

"O"

Odor Threshold – The lowest concentration of a substance's vapor, in air, that can be smelled

Orange Peel – A roughness in the surface of a finish which resembles the skin of an orange.

OSHA – Occupational Safety and Health Administration which establishes and enforces laws relating to worker safety.

"P"

pH – The pH of a solution is a measurement of its acidity or alkalinity. The scale covers a range of 0 to 14, with 7 being the neutral point.

Pitting – Formation of small craters on the surface of concrete and terrazzo floors which will grow in size, with traffic and chemical exposure, unless coated with a protective floor finish.

Plasticizer – An ingredient added to floor finish to make it flexible.

Plasticizer Migration – Plasticizers which are present in some types of vinyl and vinyl asbestos flooring and can attack a floor finish.

Powdering – A disintegration of a polish film into a fine white dust. Powdering can be the result of poor adhesions, loss of plasticizing agents to cleaning solutions, application while temperature or relative humidity is too low to allow proper film formation, application to an unclean floor, heavy traffic or inclement weather.

Polymers – Are compounds whose molecules are very large. When polymers dry, they form films, much in the same manner in which paint dries to a thin film. This is particularly helpful in floor care products where the film protects the surface and may provide a shine as well.

Preservative – A substance which inhibits the growth of molds, bacteria, etc. and thus helps to prevent spoilage, decay, discoloration, oxidation and bacterial attack.

"R"

Recoat – Procedure incorporated in floor maintenance programs to increase the level of protection by applying an additional coat of floor finish.

Resilient Tile – Tile that will withstand shock without permanent damage; Includes rubber, cork, asphalt, linoleum, vinyl and vinyl asbestos. This tile will give under impact and certain loads and then return to its original form after the load is removed.

"S"

Scuffing – Non-discoloring marks in a floor where the film has been dulled by traffic. In a waxed floor they can generally be removed by buffing with a floor machine. The spray buffing technique is generally used to remove scuffmarks from polymer finishes.

Sealer – A coating used to seal the pores of a surface. Generally used when floors are worn, porous or won't hold a floor finish.

Slip Coefficient – A measurement or the coefficient of friction as measured on the James Machine, an instrument used to test the static coefficient of friction of a surface. U.L. considers 0.5 or above the safe limit.

Slip Resistance – The "drag" encountered when walking on a floor. The higher the coefficient of friction, the greater will be the slip resistance.

Solid Content – The amount of ingredients in a floor finish that do not evaporate or volatilize at 105 degrees.

Solids – The residue or percentage weight of materials that is left after the volatile materials have been evaporated. This is not a measure of concentration since some materials can be completely driven off with heat, even though they are 100% pure chemical. Expressed as % non-volatile. (e.g. 21% non-volatile or 79% volatile).

Spray Buff – An intermediate floor care procedure which cleans, removes black marks and shines the wear areas of the floor. Utilizes a sprayed solution, a floor machine and a synthetic pad.

Stripper – Specifically formulated detergent which breaks the bond of floor wax and finish.

Substrate – The surface which the coating is applied.

“T”

Tackiness – A sticky or adhesive condition that is property of applied floor finishes when not completely dried.

Terrazzo – A non-resilient floor material composed of marble and Portland cement.

Thinner – A liquid used to reduce the viscosity of a coating and that will evaporate before or during the cure of a film.

Thermoplastic – A polymer which softens when exposed to heat and returns to its original condition when cooled to room temperature. The polymer resins and waxes used in floor polishes are thermoplastic.

“U”

U.L. – Underwriters Laboratories. An organization that tests manufacturers products for safety.

“V”

Vinyl Asbestos Tile (VAT) – Resembles asphalt tile so closely, it is difficult to distinguish between the two. Vinyl type resins are used as the binder instead of asphalt resins, contain asbestos, pigments and inert fibers; usually the colors are brighter than asphalt.

“W”

Waterborne Coatings – A coating containing more than 5 weight percent water in its volatile fraction.

Water Resistance – The ability of a floor finish to be unaffected by water spilled on it.

Water Spotting – Change in appearance of a surface finish resulting from spot wetting by water.