How to Sand a timber floor

Materials

- Woodfiller, sandpaper
- Floor finish (clear polyurethane, tung oil)
- Finish applicator (mop or roller)

Tools

- Floor stripper
- Floor sander
- Floor edger
- Vacuum cleaner
- Triangular sander
- Rotary orbital sander
- Floor polisher

Preparation

Begin by removing all furniture from the area and taking up all existing floor coverings. Fitted carpets can be pulled up at the edges.

To remove vinyl squares or glued rubber-backed carpet, use a floor stripper. This machine has a chisel action that cuts away under the floor covering. An accessible edge such as at a doorway or a removed tile is required to get the machine started and the machine should be allowed to cool down every hour to avoid overheating the unit.

Secure any loose boards with a nail gun then punch all nails well below the surface. Apply woodfiller to nail holes and defects and allow the woodfiller enough time to cure fully.

Cover and tape up all doorways and openings to other rooms, to prevent fine wood dust settling throughout the house during the sanding process.

Run a floor sander over the timber floor, first in both diagonal directions and then along the grain (i.e. along the floorboards). Start with a coarse abrasive paper on the machine and then work down through medium to fine papers. On new floors you can usually start medium and go on to fine.

Because the floor sander won’t sand the floor right up to the edges, it is necessary to use a floor edger. This machine is much smaller than a floor sander and will sand right to the edge along the wall. However, even a floor sander won’t sand into corners. These can be done by hand or with an oscillating triangular sander.

The coarse paper levels the floor quickly but gives a rough finish. By progressing through medium and fine papers, a smoother floor is achieved. For a professional superfine finish, use a rotary orbital floor sander after you’ve finished with the floor sander, running through the finer papers which are also graded coarse, medium and fine.

Regularly vacuum the floor with a heavy-duty vacuum cleaner to keep dust down and prevent dust from clogging the sanding papers.

With the right tools, you can successfully sand your own floors, creating beautifully timber floors at a fraction of the price.
Applying the finish

For a glossy clear finish, apply two or three coats of flooring grade polyurethane. Heavy traffic areas should receive at least three coats. Apply with a lamb’s wool applicator, but wash, dry and comb the wool to remove any loose fibres that would otherwise end up in the polyurethane.

For a natural finish apply tung oil or Scandinavian oil with a suitable mop, or you can choose to stain or lime the floor.

If you wish to stencil the floor, you may find it easier to paint the design after one or two clear coats have been applied and then seal it with a further clear coat.

For a brilliant sheen on your floor, buff it with a floor polisher fitted with a lamb’s wool buffing pad.

A comprehensive do-it-yourself booklet and video is available at all Kennards Hire branches.

Hire tools that make the job easy

*Machines marked * usually require a ute or trailer for transportation. If your vehicle is fitted with a towbar, Kennards Hire have trailers at very reasonable rates. Alternatively you can hire a one tonne ute or tipper, to carry the equipment and other materials you may require.

**Floor stripper **
A floor stripper from Kennards Hire will remove cork and vinyl tiles, and glued carpet from timber floors, quickly and easily. With the chisel blade reversed, the stripper also works on concrete floors.

**Vacuum cleaner**
The fine dust generated by floor sanding will quickly clog up the average household vacuum cleaner. Kennards Hire have industrial quality vacuum cleaners that are designed for this sort of heavy work.

**Floor sander**
Lightweight floor sanders from Kennards Hire are easy to use. Take home enough coarse, medium and fine papers to do the job, and any you don’t use, you can return and you won’t be charged for them.

**Safety gear**
Dust from sanding can be hazardous and a nuisance if you don’t wear appropriate protective gear. Kennards Hire have inexpensive safety gear for sale, including dust masks, goggles and ear plugs.

**Floor edger**
To sand the edges of the floor, a floor edger can be hired from Kennards Hire when you pick up the floor sander. Again, any papers you don’t use won’t be charged to you if you return them.

**Oscillating triangular sander**
The Fein oscillating triangular sander from Kennards Hire has a patented sanding action to achieve a fine finish in corners and awkward areas.

**Rotary orbital sander **
Principally used for sanding cork and parquetry flooring, the rotary orbital sander from Kennards Hire is also used by professionals and others to achieve a superfine timber floor.

**Floor polisher **
For buffing a timber floor to a brilliant shine, you can purchase your own lamb’s wool buffing pad and hire a floor polisher from Kennards Hire.