

The Recoat Option - A Good Investment (March 2002)

By Michael Purser

For many people looking to rejuvenate their floors, a simple recoating of the area may be just the answer. Compared to other options, it can provide a durable solution in less time for less money. To give you a good overview, let's look at why you do it, how you do it and the plusses and minuses of this option.

The finish on your floor can start deteriorating for any number of reasons. A recent remodeling project, hyper pets, exterior landscaping (I am currently experiencing this!) or just simply showing the affects of wear and tear from an active family. Regardless, the finish has lost its luster, looks chalky and wear patterns are conspicuous. This can especially be true in high use areas like family rooms or kitchens. By and large, all you are wanting is for the surface to look uniform and to regain its original appearance.

Before

Notice the dull and chalky look of this kitchen floor.



After

After a recoat, the floor has more protection and the original color.



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All recoating involves is the application of one, maybe two, coats of finish directly to the floors once they have been thoroughly prepped. (It is a lot like adding a fresh coat of paint to a wall or ceiling.) You start by removing all the furniture and rugs. (No working around area rugs, please!) The surface is then thoroughly cleaned and allowed to dry. Next you prep the surface either by chemicals or mechanically using a buffer. The chemicals are not noxious and do not create any problems for anyone in the house. And any buffing should be done with the buffer hooked up to a vacuum system. In either case this process could, and should, be **completely dustless**. No excuses accepted. You may need to touch up some spots to build up worn areas. Next, you make sure the floor is clean and apply the finish. Two coats if needed. After a few days, furniture can go back in and rugs can go back down when the finish has cured.

Three things you need to watch out for. First, make sure you have an experienced person doing this. I have seen recoats botched because the prep was too aggressive and left scratches in the new finish. And even though the chemicals are relatively benign, they do need to be used correctly. (Remember folks, experience counts!) Second, you need to make sure the floors have never been waxed (paste or acrylic), heavily oiled or that oil soaps have been used extensively in cleaning the surface. This could result in poor bonding and a finish that either peels off or scratches much too easily. And third, recoating is usually not an option for older coatings. If the finish is more than thirty years old you run too much of a risk that some type of material has been used on it that will be incompatible with contemporary coatings. Homeowners need to understand that any deep scratches, gouges or indentations will show through any new applications of finish.

By and large, this is a great option to investigate. The cost will vary among contractors depending on the amount of prep needed and the type of finish used to recoat but when it is available, it is good value. And the amount of disruption and down time is easily managed. In the end, you get wood colors that are clear and crisp and a floor that looks great! And the icing on the cake is you also have increased the amount of protection you have on the floors. Like I said, check this option out with an experienced contractor - it's worth the effort.

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