

## Waterlox Floor Finishing Guide

While people have a wide variety of tastes in wall color, window treatments, art, furniture, or just about anything else that you can think of that falls into the category of home decoration, a beautifully finished wood floor is one thing that you can count on to be universally appreciated and admired (except, perhaps, by carpeting salesmen).

Whether you plan to do the entire job yourself, hire a contractor, or have your floors professionally prepped with you doing the finish, you have already done one thing right: **Chosen a Waterlox floor finish.**

We feel that we have the best customer service in the industry and want to make sure that you are happy with your choice of a Waterlox floor finish next week and next year. This Floor Finishing Guide is intended to be used as a reference for Waterlox customers, homeowners, and contractors to follow when working on floor finishing projects. Tools, products, materials, techniques, building codes, and local regulations change; therefore, Waterlox assumes no liability for omissions, errors, or the outcome of any project. The reader must always exercise reasonable caution, follow applicable codes and regulations, and is urged to consult with a professional, e-mail [info@waterlox.com](mailto:info@waterlox.com), or give us a call at 800-321-0377 if in doubt about any procedures. Please read our [terms of use](#).

### Tips

Throughout this guide we have added TIPS... suggestions that we have found through the years that will make your job easier and produce the best possible results. Here is the first one:

**Tip:** Waterlox products are unique, and, while very easy to use, our application instructions may be different from those of other floor finishes that you may have used in the past. We strongly suggest that you follow our instructions for the best results with our products.

**Tip:** Clicking on [brown](#) text will link to more information on the subject

### Choosing your Waterlox Finish

One question that we are asked frequently is, "Which Waterlox product(s) should I use on my floor?" All Waterlox Tung Oil Finishes offer a durable, protective finish that is formulated for use on wood floors. It is available in satin, medium (semi-gloss), and gloss sheens. Your choice of sheen is a matter of personal preference. The sheen does not affect the product's durability.

**Tip:** Regardless of the sheen desired, we strongly recommend applying a coat of two of our Original Sealer/Finish to your floor first to seal the wood and act as a base coat for our satin or gloss products

Unfortunately there really is no “universal sheen level” standard in the wood coating industry. Terms like “gloss,” “semi-gloss,” and “satin” are subjective at best. Our gloss may be glossier than that of another manufacturer’s. Your idea of what semi-gloss is might be someone else’s gloss... add to the mix that the same finish may look different on various wood species... our “Original Satin” may look glossier on Brazilian cherry than it does on yellow pine! While we do describe the sheen level of our products by using a “degree of gloss” scale, we encourage our customers to always do a test area... that’s why we sell “trial sizes” of our most popular floor finishes.

#### [Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish](#)



55-degree sheen level is our “medium” or semi-gloss. We recommend this product as the first coat for ANY floor finishing job. Used alone, it will give most floor surfaces a shiny but not “glaring” appearance. It must look pretty good, as it is by far our most popular floor finish.

25-degree sheen  
little reflection.  
Popular on  
contains  
contents



#### [Original Satin Finish](#)

level, offers a “subdued” level of gloss. There is a sheen but very little reflection. Newly formulated for those who are looking for a subdued look. “character” floors. Note: Waterlox Original Satin Finish contains a flattening agent which can settle to the bottom of the can. Stir vigorously before and during use.

#### [Waterlox Original High-Gloss Finish](#)



85-degree sheen level gives you our shiniest floor finish. When you desire a very reflective “glass” or “gym floor” appearance.

The right Waterlox product and application for YOUR wood type

Wood, like all natural products, can vary in characteristics. Two boards of the same species of wood can vary in how they accept stain and finish due to differences in age, moisture content, and milling method. It is recommended that you “test finish” a piece of scrap wood or an inconspicuous area of the floor to ensure your complete satisfaction. How to “test finish” your wood: Most wood floor types can be divided into two categories, hardwood and softwood floors. Most hardwoods require a total of 3 coats of one or more of our Waterlox Original product(s). Softer woods like pine or Douglas fir require 4 coats. The charts below describe the Waterlox products that you’ll apply to achieve the sheen that you desire for your wood type.

**Tip:** All Waterlox Original products should be applied at 500 sq. feet per gallon per coat, using a lambswool applicator to ensure proper penetration and film build.

#### Waterlox for Hardwood Floors

(oak, ash, hickory, cherry, maple, walnut, teak, chestnut, etc.)

*Applied at 500 sq. feet per gallon per coat of desired sheen*

<b>Desired Sheen</b>	<b>Waterlox Product and Application</b>
Satin finish	25° Gloss Level 1 coat of Original Sealer/Finish 2 coats of Original Satin Finish
Semi gloss finish	55° Gloss Level 3 coats of Original Sealer/Finish Our most popular finish
Gloss finish	85° Gloss Level 1 coat of Original Sealer/Finish 2 coats of Original High Gloss Finish

#### Waterlox for Softwood Floors

(pine, fir, poplar, etc.)

*Applied at 500 sq. feet per gallon per coat Desired Sheen*

<b>Desired Sheen</b>	<b>Waterlox Product and Application</b>
Satin finish	25° Gloss Level 2 coats of Original Sealer/Finish 2 coats of Original Satin Finish
Semi-gloss finish	55° Gloss Level 4 coats of Original Sealer/Finish Our most popular finish
Gloss finish	85° Gloss level 2 coats of Original Sealer/Finish 2 coats of Original High Gloss Finish

#### **How Much Finish Will I Need?**

Now that you have used the charts to determine the Waterlox product(s) that you will apply, you need to know how much finish you will need to coat your floors. To determine the amount of finish needed, simply multiply the square footage of the floor times the number of coats needed and divide by 500. Please use our Material Calculator to determine how much finish you will need to finish your floor.

## Preparing Your Surface

Preparation is the most important (and most time-consuming) step in finishing your wood floor.

### **Sanding:**

New floors or floors previously coated with polyurethane should be sanded before finishing with Waterlox. Sanding should result in a smooth, clean surface without swirl marks. Any flaws will only stand out more clearly when the floor is finished. Final sanding should be done with 100 to 150 grit paper. We feel that sanding a wood floor is an art. Belt and drum sanders can easily gouge your floors, and orbital and rotary sanding machines take a long time and can leave swirl marks. Like people who think that they can cut their own hair, for an inexperienced operator, the results can be disappointing. Hiring a professional to handle the sanding could be money well spent! Then you can save the fun part for yourself ... applying Waterlox, of course!

### **Dust removal:**

All wood dust and grit resulting from the sanding operations must be removed before applying the finish. The importance of this cannot be overemphasized. Using a vacuum sweeper, vacuum with the grain and across the grain. Finally, wiping the floor with a clean lint-free rag wetted with mineral spirits or paint thinner will also aid in the removal of any residual dust.

**Tip:** Before applying the finish, you may wish to wipe down the floor with a thin coat of paint thinner. The color and tone that you see while the floor is wet give you a “preview” of what your finished floor will look like and give you a chance to correct any imperfections. Make sure that you have adequate ventilation.

### **Staining your floor:**

In situations where personal preference requires a change in wood color/tone, a stain can be used. We recommend using an old-fashioned, oil-based stain that DOES NOT contain urethane. Minwax, Zar, and Duraseal are all adequate choices. It is recommended that the stain and/or stain mixture be tested on a piece of scrap wood or an inconspicuous area of the floor and followed by the subsequent coats of Waterlox Original finishes. There are **two basic methods** for adding color to the wood surface:

#### 1. Staining before finishing with Waterlox Original finishes

You may stain the floor following the manufacturer’s directions for cure time or wait 72 hours, whichever is longer, before applying coats of Waterlox Original finishes.

#### 2. Adding stain to Waterlox.

Many of our customers have great results by adding stain to their first coat(s) of Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish Original Sealer/Finish (up to a MAXIMUM ratio of 4:1 Waterlox/stain). This method of staining eliminates a separate step and provides a smooth, even color change even on soft woods like pine, which can become blotchy. Simply brush on the mixture and let it dry--wiping off is not required.

**Tip:** Make a record of the amount of stain used per gallon so that the procedure can be repeated later if necessary.

Tip: You can add stain only to our Original Sealer/Finish and only to the first coat.

**Tip:** Waterlox Original Tung Oil products produce a slight “patina” or amber coloration to most woods. Try finishing a test area before staining your wood floor...you may find that Waterlox alone makes your floor look so beautiful that you’ll want to forgo staining altogether!

## Applying Your Waterlox Finish

You have prepped your floor, assembled the correct tools, and chosen a Waterlox finish. Applying the finish is your final step!

### Applying the Finish:



Applying Waterlox Sealer Finish and stain with a lamb's wool applicator

The first and sometimes even the second coat of finish may look uneven and "blotchy." This is

normal.

**Important Note:** *Ensure adequate ventilation by opening windows and doors where applicable. Insert a box fan in a window exhausting outward, and open a window or door at the other end of the room for cross ventilation. It is not recommended that any solvents or solvent-based materials be used in an enclosed area. Read label directions completely before using.*

**Tip:** At this point we do not recommend using ceiling fans, as they can interfere with the intake of fresh air and can cause the floor's surface to "skin" or dry prematurely.

Although there are many right ways and few wrong ways to apply Waterlox Tung Oil Finishes, for wood floors, we recommend using a 8" to 12" lamb's wool applicator (use a natural bristle brush to "cut in" if necessary). Work out of a paint-roller pan or 5-gallon pail. Purchase an applicator that will fit into the roller pan or 5-gallon pail so that it will be completely immersed in the finish.

- Plan your application so that you don't finish yourself into a corner! For example, start in the far corner of the room and work so that you will end up at an exit.
- Pour the product into a paint tray and dip your applicator into the tray.
- Start along a wall and apply the finish using very light pressure on the applicator. Apply a coat along the entire length of the room, "reloading" your applicator as necessary. You'll want a good heavy coat to get proper film build and to allow Waterlox's "self-leveling" properties to work.
- At the end of the room, repeat, this time going in the opposite direction (see illustration). Maintain a wet edge to avoid lap marks, preferably overlapping into the finish you previously applied by several inches. Be sure to feather in your start and stop places with your applicator.
- Allow each coat to dry thoroughly (12-24 hours). Take more time if drying conditions are not advantageous (i.e., high humidity, below average temperatures, or low ventilation).

Sanding for adhesion purposes is not necessary between coats. However, a light sanding with fine sandpaper (320 or finer), steel wool (#4/0), or a white pad on a buffing machine can be completed to remove any aesthetic imperfections such as lint, dust, hair, or mars in the finish.

**Tip:** After applying your first and maybe even your second coat of finish, your floor may look uneven in appearance. This is normal, as Waterlox Original Tung Oil Finishes penetrate deep into the wood pores/fibers and will build up to an even film, when applied correctly with the suggested number of coats and coverage.

**Tip: Application Temperature:** 70 degrees is the optimal room temperature for applying our products. We understand that there are times when this is not possible. Applying Waterlox in lower temperatures, even below freezing, will lengthen the cure time, but will NOT adversely effect the finish.

**After your final coat is applied, you are finished...but not done.**

**Cure Time of Waterlox & Tung Oil Finishes**

The first 7 days are the most critical after applying our Waterlox Tung Oil Finishes, so please adhere to the following practices:

1. After the last coat is applied, we advise staying off the floor for at least 24 hours (48 hours, if possible). After this time, the floor may be used for "sock traffic" only and kept to a minimum. No shoes or bare feet (oils from the skin may dull the surface).

2.

During the first 7 days keep room/ambient temperature above 70° F if possible. Air movement in the room helps replenish the required oxygen needed to cure the finish. Use fans at low speeds for this purpose. At this time ceiling fans can be employed. Throw rugs can be used in high traffic areas but should be removed each night, as the finish needs oxygen to cure.

3. After 4-7 days, the room is ready for normal use. Be sure to use felt pads on the bottom of all furniture to help prevent scratching of the finish.



The finished floor with 3 coats of Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish