

CHAPTER 5

WATER POPPING & BLEACHING

Part I – Water Popping Guidelines and Methods

- A. Water popping, also sometimes called grain popping, is a process used to open the grain of the wood flooring so it will accept stain more readily and evenly.
- B. Before attempting to use the water popping technique on a floor, do a test on a sample board. The key to successful water popping is controlling the amount of water applied to the wood and the amount of time the wood needs to dry before applying the stain. Measure the moisture content before water popping to establish the baseline moisture content, and then test to see how long it takes for the wood to return to its original moisture content.
- C. The effect of water popping will vary, depending on the amount of water used, the length of time it's allowed to dry, the species of wood, and the type and color of stain to be applied.
- D. Record the moisture content of the wood flooring before water popping. The wood must be allowed to dry completely and the flooring must return to the correct moisture content before proceeding with finish application.

Part II – General Bleaching Precautions

- A. Aggressively ventilate the room with open windows and fans, and wear approved respirators.
- B. Bleaching wood flooring retains the general tone and reduces variations in color without obscuring the grain pattern.
- C. Bleaching softens the surface fibers of the wood.
- D. Bleaching a wood floor will change the existing color. It will not make the floor white. Red oak will lighten to a pink cast and white oak may have a greenish cast.
- E. Make sure the flooring is clean and free from oils, grease and old finish.
- F. Bleach may be caustic and can cause burns. Safety glasses and rubber gloves are recommended.
- G. Bleaching will cause the grain of the wood to raise.
- H. Sanding with fine paper or buffing may be necessary after bleaching will be necessary to restore flooring to a smooth surface. Refer to finish manufacturer's recommendation.
- I. Most wood fillers cannot be bleached.

Part III – General Bleaching Guidelines

- A. Use only bleach specified for wood flooring.
- B. Follow the bleach manufacturer's instructions for application. Some bleach may need to be neutralized.

- C. Do a test area in an inconspicuous place or on a test panel, as the length of time the bleach remains on the floor will affect the degree of color removal.
- D. Do not do multiple applications. Subsequent applications soften the wood and make it prone to denting.
- E. A stain may be applied before the surface finish.
- F. Always use non-ambering finishes with bleached/white floors and pastels.
- G. Record the moisture content of the wood before applying bleach. Bleached wood must be allowed to dry completely and the flooring must return to the correct moisture content before proceeding with finish application.
- H. NOTE: Many manufacturers of stains and finishes recommend using a system, a series of products from the same manufacturer, to ensure compatibility and best adherence.
- I. BEFORE USING DIFFERENT MANUFACTURERS FOR THE BLEACH, STAIN AND FINISH PRODUCTS, CHECK WITH THE MANUFACTURER FOR COMPATIBILITY.**