

1940

EC1173 Revised 1940 Care and Repair of Walls and Floors

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
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U. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating
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CARE AND REPAIR OF WALLS AND FLOORS
(Excerpts from Bulletin 1173, by Muriel Smith, published in 1933)

"There is a moral value in having things repaired."

The floor, walls and ceiling together constitute the background of the room. A floor is the structural base of the room, it is the foundation from which the walls rise and form the background. Unless the background is good in color, tone, and texture, much of the effectiveness of the furniture, pictures, ornaments, and rugs will be lost.

Taking nature as a guide in the great outdoors, the earth, which we may liken to the floor of our house, is dark and generally neutral in tone; the blue sky directly overhead is light and is the ceiling of the earth. The sky just above the horizon is medium in color between the two and compares with the wall of a room. This is a safe guide upon which to build a plan for surface finishes.

The first step when planning for repair or improvement is to make a survey as to the work to be done considering the time, strength, and money available.

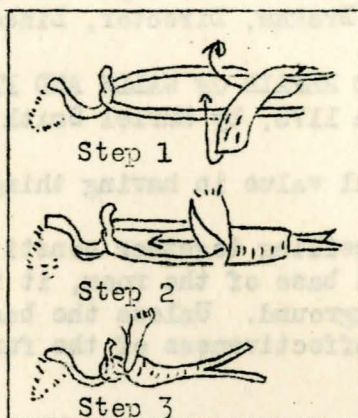
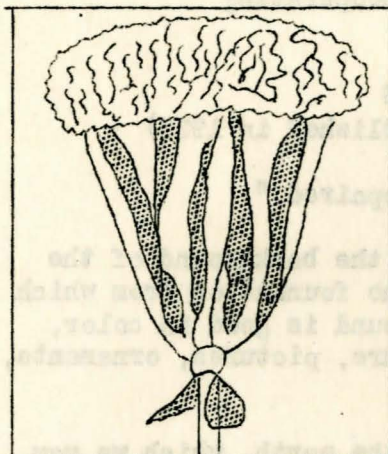
The second step is to arrange for any major repairs such as bracing the foundation, changing a partition, repairing any roof leaks, or filling cracks and holes.

The third step is to study various possible finishes such as paper, wall paint, enamels, calcimines, and textile wall coverings; considering the cost, durability and ease with which an amateur may apply them. Then make the choice having in mind appropriateness to the room in which it is used, money available, the usefulness and durability due to quality.

Part I. Care and Repair of Walls

Dust, moisture, and dirt collect on any wall surface. So long as the surface is smooth and attractive in color we are anxious to clean it in such a way as to keep the original appearance. Occasional brushing of walls is necessary. This is best accomplished by a long handled, soft hair wall brush made especially for that purpose. In case only the floor broom is available a homemade tufted bag may be made especially for this purpose and serve very well if kept perfectly clean. The reason for using a hair brush or such a duster for the occasional wiping of walls is to avoid rubbing the soil on to the paper so firmly that it can not be removed later with a wall cleaner.

Wall Duster. Cut strips of old soft cloth 1 1/2 inches wide and 5 inches long. Take six yards of cord. Fasten center at a convenient place such as a door knob or hook. Hold the cords taut with left hand. Place one of the strips of cloth with its center over the cords. Pull the ends of the strip up between the cords with the right hand, hold ends of strip upright and push the tuft to point where



cords are fastened. Place second strip with center over cords, pull ends up between cords and push this tuft against the first tuft. Repeat until sufficient tufting has been made (about 3 yards).

Measure 8 inches from end of tufted strip. Turn at this point and sew the tufted strip in continuous rows around this center forming an elongated pad about 4 inches wide and 12 inches long. Make the pads

as nearly as possible the same shape and size as the surface or the brush end of the broom. Sew firmly using heavy thread.

For the side of the bag, cut a piece of strong material long enough to extend around the tufted base. Allow ample material for the seam and hem. The case must be just large enough to fit snugly over broom and tie at the base of the handle. Allow for a seam and one-half inch hem. Sew the side piece to the tufted pad with tufted side in. Begin at center of one side. Close the side seam. Finish the bag with a half inch hem, leaving two openings for double drawstring. Insert the drawstring. Turn the bag right side out. Slip it over the broom. Pull up drawstring and tie around the handle. Such a duster will require frequent washing as a soiled one will not clean the walls.

How to Remove Grease Spots from Wall Paper. In even the best kept houses grease spots and finger marks will sometimes appear on a new wall paper. Take a clean white blotter, place it over the spot and press with a hot iron. In case it has not all disappeared, slightly moisten a small quantity of talcum powder or whiting with ammonia, apply to the spot and allow to remain over night. Several applications of the powder may be necessary. Brush the powder away lightly. Any rubbing tends to spread the stain.

A Homemade Wall Paper Cleaner. In cases where the wall surface has become so soiled that dusting will not clean it, the surface may need to be gone over with a cleaner. Good commercially made wall cleaners are on the market at reasonable cost. However, the following proportions will make an inexpensive wall cleaner which may be used. This method of cleaning requires time, patience, and unless carefully done the results may be uneven and streaked. But if several persons share the labor it can be quickly done.

- 1 c. flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. cold water
- 2 T. salt
- 2 T. vinegar
- 1 T. kerosene

Blend the flour and salt and mix to a smooth paste with cold water. Add vinegar and kerosene. Boil until thick, stirring constantly. Do not be discouraged if it appears to attain the appearance of a terrible mess. Continue to stir until the flour is thoroughly cooked, otherwise it will stick when used. DO NOT ADD ANY MORE

MOISTURE. LET COOL AND KNEAD WELL WITH THE HAND. Spread papers on the floor before starting work. Apply to the walls like the purchased kind which is to erase the walls clean. Take a piece about the size of a turkey egg and rub or roll gently in even regular strokes downward. While working fold in the soiled surface of the mass until it is either too small to handle or so dirty it starts to streak the paper. It is well to double the recipe because it saves making so often. From 4 to 6 times the recipe will clean an average sized room.

Varnished or Enameled Wood Surface Cleaner. Add 1 t. powdered glue crystals to 2 quarts hot water and wash surface gently. Rinse. Rub with dry cloth to produce luster. If at any time a new coat of varnish is to be applied, be sure to wash a surface cleaned in this manner to remove all trace of glue.

A varnished surface may also be cleaned with the following solution.

- 1 T. Turpentine
- 3 T. linseed oil
- 1 qt. hot water

Immerse a soft cloth in the solution, wring as dry as possible. Clean the wood surface, then polish with a chamois skin or soft cloth.

Home Cleaning Solution. The following solution will assist in cleaning soiled surfaces which are painted, varnished or enameled. This solution may also be used on a smooth painted plaster wall. The only precaution to be remembered is that the solution should be applied to a small area, say not more than two square feet, rubbed over the surface in a circular motion and wiped off immediately. Follow at once with a cloth wrung from clear rinse water. If a strong soap is used 1 tablespoon of vinegar may be added to the rinse water.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| $\frac{1}{2}$ c. laundry starch | $\frac{1}{2}$ c. sal soda washing powder |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ c. cold water | $\frac{1}{2}$ c. cold water |
| 4 c. hot water | $1\frac{1}{2}$ c. Pumice or rotten stone |
| 1 lb. mild soap chips | 1 c. household ammonia |
| 2 gal. hot water | |

Dissolve the starch in the $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cold water. Add slowly to the hot water and and cook to a smooth paste. Dissolve the soap chips in 2 gallons of hot water. Add the starch paste to the soap solution. Dissolve sal soda powder in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cold water and add to the soap solution. Stir until smooth and let stand until cool. Add the pumice or rotten stone and the ammonia. Stir thoroughly. Keep in covered container. These proportions make enough to clean the wall surface of an average room.

Part II. Care and Repair of Floors

The day to day care of floors is much the same for every type of floor finish. Keep the floor swept and dusted with a dry mop to prevent soil accumulating and grinding into the finish. If something is spilled upon the floor, clean it up as quickly as possible. If grease is spilled upon the floor, and has had time to be absorbed by the wood, or if acid from radio batteries makes an ugly spot on the floor, we must not expect to rectify the damage completely, without refinishing the spot.

Sweeping today is more closely akin to the gentle art of brushing because of modern equipment and modern flooring. The ordinary type of household broom has

an increasingly used assistant in the soft bristled push broom with an action similar to a brush. This push broom is light to handle, sweeps close to the floor, and with even forward strokes will raise little or no dust. It reaches under low furniture and because of its width, it covers a large surface with each stroke. It does not scratch polished floors.

Outline of Routine Care for Various Floor Finishes

Equipment and Supplies	Method
UNFINISHED WOOD FLOORS	
1. Mild Soap	1. Scrub with grain of floor 2. Use little water and mild soap 3. Rinse with clear water and wipe dry
OILED FLOORS	
1. Soft brush 2. Dust mop (oiled or not) 3. Soap 4. Oiled cloth	1. Sweep with soft brush 2. Wipe with oiled mop 3. Wash occasionally with mild soapy water 4. Re-oil when necessary
PAINTED FLOORS	
1. Kerosene 2. Cloths	1. Wash with warm water to which a little kerosene has been added.
WAXED FLOORS	
1. Soft dry cloth, soft floor brush, treated mop*	1. Wipe regularly with clean cloth 2. Rub with a treated mop* 3. Re-wax any worn spots
VARNISHED AND SHELLACKED FLOORS	
1. Soft brush 2. Damp mop (not wet) 3. Mild soap 4. Treated mop*	1. Sweep with soft brush 2. Clean with damp mop 3. If necessary wash with mild soapy water

*To Prepare a Treated Mop. Secure a tin can large enough to hold the dusting mop. Brush the inside of the can with a mixture using equal parts boiled linseed oil and turpentine. Press the mop into the can, cover with a lid and allow it to remain in can overnight, before using. The mop absorbs enough of the mixture so that it will easily take up the dust from the floor.

Treatment for Wood Finish which has Turned White. Wood which has had its finish marred so that it has turned white because of heat or by water which was allowed to stand on it, may usually be restored by one of the following methods:

1. Rub with a soft cloth and a mixture of pumice and boiled linseed oil.
2. Apply a small amount of turpentine to the spot. This usually penetrates the surface and restores the color to the stain. Then rub the spot with boiled linseed oil.

3. Mix the following in a small bottle, shake well before using.

- 1 T. vinegar
- 3 T. boiled linseed oil or olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ t. turpentine

Cover the spot with the liquid and allow it to stand a few minutes.

Rub briskly with a soft cloth following the grain of the wood. Repeat until stain disappears.

Preparing Old Floors for New Finishes. Before any finish can be applied to a floor it must be made clean. Remove any old finish, make smooth by planing, if necessary. Countersink or remove any nails, sandpaper the surface with the grain of the wood and make perfectly clean and dry.

It may be necessary to remove old paint or varnish in which case use either a commercial or homemade remover. A commercial remover is easily applied but is expensive for a large surface. It must be followed with an application of denatured alcohol to prevent it from continuing to burn the wood.

Homemade Varnish Remover

- 4 T. laundry starch or corn starch
- 1 qt. water
- 2 T. concentrated lye dissolved in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cold water

Make a cooked starch solution and pour the dissolved lye into it. Stir until smooth. Prepare this mixture in a crock or old granite kettle as it will react with metals. Apply to a small area (3 square feet) with a vegetable fiber brush which has a handle or with a swab made by attaching a cloth to a stick. Allow to remain on the floor only a few minutes or until varnish or paint is softened. Scrape off with broad knife into a newspaper. Rub with steel wool and wipe as clean as possible. Then wipe with a cloth saturated in vinegar which prevents the further action of the lye on the wood. Finish by washing the area of floor with clear water. Repeat the process on another 3 foot area. Let floor dry 24 hours.

To Bleach Dark Stains in Wood. When moisture has soaked through the finish and caused wood to darken it must be bleached. Remove the entire finish. When dry, apply the following: Make a concentrated solution of oxalic acid by dissolving $\frac{1}{4}$ pound of oxalic acid crystals in 1 quart of water. Apply the acid to the spot with a cloth wrapped around the end of a stick. Allow the solution to stand on the spot one to two hours. Wipe off. In case it is not sufficiently bleached make other applications. Wash the bleached area thoroughly with clear water and let dry. Sand the surface carefully. Apply the new finish.

Stain and Filler for Wood Surfaces. Stain is used to bring out the grain of the wood or to make it harmonize in color with other woodwork in the room. For open grain woods, purchase a natural paste filler and add to it an oil stain to secure the desired color or purchase it already mixed. For close grained woods only the stain is necessary.

Directions for use: A filler stain in any case should be thinned with turpentine to the consistency of thin cream, applied with a bristle brush and worked well into the pores of the wood. When the filler has had time to penetrate, rub it in with a scouring motion across the grain of the wood. The longer it is allowed to remain on the wood the darker the color becomes. To take off all the surplus paste

use a coarse material such as burlap, sawdust, or excelsior. Rub smooth with clean rags or fresh burlap. Allow to dry 24 to 36 hours. Sandpaper and wipe the floor free of all dust, then the surface is ready for varnish or other finish. The room should be kept free from dust until the finish is dry.

Applying Various Floor Finishes

Varnish Floor Finish. A slow drying spar varnish which is elastic, resistant to water and durable is a wise and economical choice. Cheap varnish may be used for vertical surfaces which will not receive hard wear, but for floor only, the best quality material is advisable. Allow ample time between coats for thorough drying.

Painted Floor Finishes. In selecting paints for interior woodwork, attention should be given to the following points:

1. The ease with which the color chosen will cover the former finish.
2. The beauty of the finish (gloss or dull)
3. Its appropriateness
4. The permanence of color

Sanding lightly between each coat will add much toward a good finish. A little varnish added to the last coat of paint will serve as a binder and give a higher gloss to the surface if that is desired. Select paint for bedroom and porch floors in a color which shows dust as little as possible such as a warm gray, tan or dust color.

Oiled Finish. Heat the Linseed oil in a double boiler. Remove from the fire and stir in the turpentine and Japan drier. Paint while hot on to a clean, dry floor using only a good paint brush. Wipe off any excess oil with a cloth. Let stand two days if possible before using. Following proportions are used: 1 gallon boiled linseed oil; $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon turpentine; and 1 oz. Japan drier.

Homemade Floor Wax. CAUTION--Do not work in a room where there is a fire when combining the turpentine and wax as turpentine is inflammable. Melt the following in a vessel over hot water:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. beeswax
- 1 lb. paraffin wax

Remove from the stove and add the following:

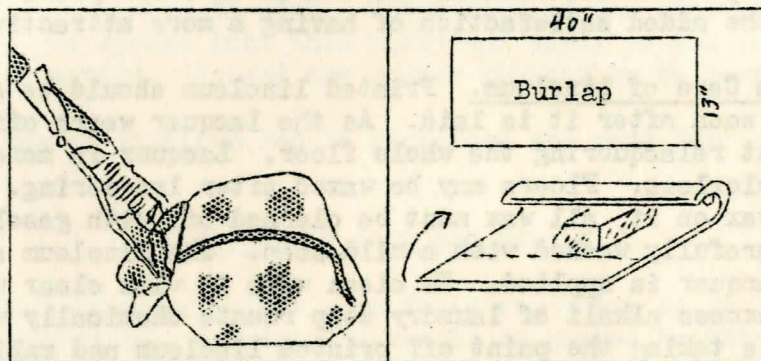
- 1 pt. raw linseed oil
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ pt. turpentine

Stir the mixture vigorously. Pour into a container. When using, apply a small amount to the floor surface. Allow it to stand half an hour. Rub into the wood and polish until there is no free wax on the floor. Do not use as much of this wax as is necessary with some other wax preparations. Use sparingly, rub well into the wood with a weighted polisher. A commercial weighted brush is by far the best. However, a substitute may be made as described in the following paragraph. Certain places frequently walked over may need to be re-waxed and polished frequently.

New products are now being advertised and shown on the market which are water base waxes and which are being sold on the merit that they need no polishing and are quick drying. Any finish which dries rapidly is to be questioned for endurance. Dealers urge that this wax be applied only on a perfectly clean surface saying that it will not be successful if applied where there is any trace of other wax left on the surface.

For the task of polishing a waxed floor the weighted brush or an electric polisher is desirable. The weighted hand polisher may be purchased reasonably and will serve a long time. Often house furnishing dealers have electric polishers which may be rented for a small amount. A polisher may be made as follows using material available.

Homemade Floor Polisher. Cover an ordinary building brick with several thickness of padding using any old soft material. Cover the padding and sew this cover into place around the brick. Take a piece of burlap 40 inches by 18 inches which is half of an ordinary sack. Fold each end to the center. Place the padded brick to the right of center edge and bring burlap up over each end of brick and



pin down to the padding. Now bring the ends of the burlap from each side and pull them through the wire bale of an ordinary mop holder. Draw the burlap through as tightly as possible and clap the holder at one side of the brick. This makes a light weight polisher but with friction rather than weight a good polish can be obtained. To give the final polish to a waxed surface cover the polisher with a piece of woolen material or old carpet and continue rubbing the surface.

Linoleum, its Care and Repair

Linoleum is one of the best and most serviceable of all floor coverings. The three general types on the market are plain, inlaid and printed linoleums. The plain has no design but the coloring matter is added to the plastic mass. It is made in a variety of colors, brown, gray, green and others. Inlaid linoleum has a design each part of which extends through to the backing. The pattern will last as long as the linoleum itself. Printed linoleum is made by stamping a design of oil paint on a thin grade of plain linoleum. A product which does not have a burlap back but is similar in appearance to linoleum is on the market. It is attractive at first but is not so durable. For small rugs which are low in cost, used only a short time, this material may be useful but for large floor coverings it is not good economy.

Plain linoleum has good wearing qualities but being a plain surface it shows soil easily and is not as attractive for the floors of a home.

From the practical standpoint linoleum floors offer many advantages. They are resilient and comfortable to walk and stand on, making housework easier. They absorb noise, so that even without rugs there is less clatter of heels. They are easy to keep clean and sanitary. When cemented, linoleum is an air tight floor which keeps out cold, so that in old houses particularly it is valuable as an insulator and helps cut down heating costs.

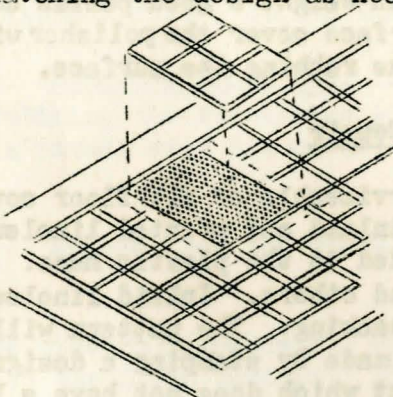
To lay linoleum properly requires some skill and if the work is not correctly done the linoleum may buckle and crack. Dealers can often give reliable directions. If possible, it is well to employ a trained worker who has the necessary tools and cement. The quarter-round should be removed before laying linoleum.

In cold weather linoleum should be in a warm room for at least 48 hours, before it is unrolled. Linoleum becomes brittle when cold and is likely to crack. Cut the linoleum so as to leave $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch for expansion. Do not tack or cement linoleum into place at once but let it lie on the floor a short time to allow for expansion. Quarter-round molding should be nailed to the baseboard and not through the linoleum.

The initial cost of inlaid linoleum seems high but the cost of varnish or lacquer alone for printed linoleum in the course of a few years would pay the difference aside from the added satisfaction of having a more attractive floor covering.

Surface Care of Linoleum. Printed linoleum should be given a coat of clear linoleum lacquer soon after it is laid. As the lacquer wears off in places it may be touched up without relacquering the whole floor. Lacquer is more resilient than varnish and is colorless. Floors may be waxed after lacquering. To re-lacquer after it has once had wax on it, all wax must be cleaned off with gasoline or naphtha and then the floor carefully washed with a mild soap. The linoleum should be thoroughly dry before the lacquer is applied. To clean wipe it with clear water or water and mild soap. The excess alkali of laundry soap reacts chemically with the oil or paint of linoleums, this taking the paint off printed linoleum and making the inlaid and the plain linoleum porous and lifeless in appearance.

How to Patch Linoleum. To repair a worn place in linoleum, cut straight lines around the hole with a sharp knife. Use this piece as a pattern and cut a patch from new material or from under a piece of furniture where its absence will not show, matching the design as nearly as possible. A piece of strong cotton material, flour sack material or muslin, should be fitted smoothly into the opening and its edges worked well under the linoleum and cemented to the back and edges of the patch and fit the patch into place. Wipe off any excess cement. Weight down the edges for 24 hours. Unless the patch is allowed to get soaked with water while mopping, it will remain in place satisfactorily.



Patching
Linoleum

Painted and Stippled Linoleum. Linoleum which has become ugly with long service but which still has a smooth firm surface is worth painting. This is particularly true of a good grade of printed linoleum. If any places are to be patched, let that be done first as described in the paragraph above.

Purchase a good grade of linoleum paint. Choose the colors having in mind the amount of light in the room. Some of the more attractive and usable colors are

deep buff or tan, gray, green and brick. Usually the pure color is too intense and is made more attractive by the addition of some gray.

When stippling is to be done it is well to blend two colors. For example, a brick color to which some gray is added becomes lighter and softer in color. Apply one coat of the grayed brick color to the entire linoleum surface. Let the paint dry the length of time indicated on the label. Apply a second coat of this foundation color, if possible let dry thoroughly. To give the effect of a rug with a border, paste decorators' tape along each side of the rug leaving a border. The width of the border should be in proportion to the size of the rug. Then start painting small areas with the contrasting color out to the decorators' tape. The stippled effect may be obtained by patting the paint while moist with the flat side of a sponge or a pad of crumpled paper or wad or old cloth. The other method the same as suggested when stippling walls may also be used. Paint some of the contrasting color on a shallow pan, press the sponge into this paint and apply to the wall. Avoid any twisting or turning motion. Reload the sponge frequently to keep the print uniform.

Old pieces of linoleum may be reclaimed and made into attractive small rugs by stippling.

Rugs, Their Care and Repair

Sweeping is not sufficient care for a rug which is in constant use. Rugs may become badly soiled and occasionally should be washed to thoroughly clean them and freshen the colors.

To Wash a Rug. First sweep the rug thoroughly, then make a soft jelly as follows:

- 1 medium bar mild soap. (shaved)
- 1 T. household ammonia.
- 3 qt. hot water.

Dissolve the soap in hot water, add the ammonia and beat the mixture until a good lather forms. Spread some of the soap with as little water as possible on a small area (3 square feet) of the rug. Apply with a brush using a circular motion and rub the surface to wash the nap of the rug. Scrape off the suds with the dull edge of a wide, pliable spatula. Go over this same area immediately with a cloth wrung from warm water to remove the soap. **Continue** on a new area. Place the rug where it will dry quickly and thoroughly.

To re-size a rug. First thoroughly clean the rug and let dry. Tack the rug napside down on a floor. Apply with a brush the following solution:

- 1. 1 part glue ($\frac{1}{4}$ lb.)
- 2. 8 parts water (2 qt.)

Dissolve the glue in the water in a double boiler. If a rug is light weight, be careful not to put on so much glue that it penetrates to the right side. Let the rug dry 24 hours. To remove the sizing, it is necessary to use **gasoline**.

To prevent Rugs from Sliding on polished Floors.

- 1. Ordinary oil cloth either old or new may be cut just enough smaller than the rug so that it will not show and place slick side down on the floor under the rug. This will hold the rug so that it will not slide on a polished floor.
- 2. A rubberized burlap may be purchased which holds a rug firmly in place.