

# How to Clean Your Floors with Homemade Non-toxic Cleaners Instead of Store Bought Chemicals

Our floors are the largest surface area in our homes that require regular cleaning. If we use chemicals, we breathe them in day and night until they dissipate. There is no need to add to our indoor air pollution when we can use simple and handy, homemade cleaning solutions.

## How to Clean Wood, Bamboo, and Laminate Floors

It would be so easy to clean every floor of our home with a steam cleaner. No muss, no fuss, nothing but water turned to steam. But regardless of the claims made by the manufacturers, steam cleaners can damage wood, bamboo, and laminate floors.

Laminate floors consist of layers of materials glued together. Any water, but especially steam, will break down the bonds between layers, causing them to buckle and split. Steam can strip the finish that is protecting your hardwood floor. Moisture that seeps into the wood will cause grains to swell and the wood to warp and splinter.

The primary rule for bamboo, laminate, and hardwood floors is the same: do not wet mop—dry mop (though damp mop would be a better descriptive term). After thoroughly sweeping or vacuuming your floor, use a well wrung out sponge or rag mop with plain water, water with a few drops of essential oil, or water with 1/4 cup of vinegar (added to a 2 gallon bucket). Use warm water; it will evaporate faster than cold. Buff the

floors dry with a soft cloth or towel.

Perusing the net, you will find other suggestions such as 1/2 cup of lemon juice added to water. However, a manufacturer's site warns against using citrus to clean laminate flooring as it will damage the finish after repeated use. Many sites, including a manufacturer's site, suggest using 1/4 cup of dish soap to a bucket of water to clean sealed hardwood floors—without rinsing. But it only stands to reason that, over time, soap residue would accumulate. If you do rinse, you are using more water. Since the object is to clean with the least amount of water possible, this method doesn't make sense.

One wood laminate manufacturer suggests mixing vinegar and water into a spray bottle. Rather than spraying the liquid on the floor, use it to dampen the bottom of your dust mop.

Another solution, claimed to be even better for wood floors than vinegar, is cleaning with tea. Brew black tea, (1 tea bag per cup of water) and either fill a spray bottle to mist the floor (a small area at a time) then follow with a damp mop, or make enough tea to immerse your mop in a bucket. As before, wring out your mop so it is as dry as possible.

## **How to Clean Linoleum, Tile, and Stone**

Linoleum and tile floors can also be cleaned with vinegar and water. The ratios vary according to preference from 1/4 cup of vinegar to a one-to-one ratio of vinegar to water. For a really dirty floor, try the following recipe:

- 1/4 cup white vinegar
- 1/4 cup baking soda
- 1 tablespoon liquid dish soap (remember to choose a natural soap)

- 2 gallons hot water
- Add a few drops of essential oil, if desired

Rinsing is not required, but if streaking occurs, rinse.

Do not use lemon juice, vinegar or other acids on marble, limestone, or travertine. To wash these floors, use a squirt of liquid soap (such as castile soap or dish soap, not detergent) in your bucket of water and wet mop. Rinse. Too much soap will cause streaking.

These floors may be the best candidates for a steam mop, but first check with the manufacturer to be sure steam mopping does not void your warranty.

All floors of all types are scratched and scarred by dirt. Mats outside and inside each entrance can help limit the amount of dirt on your floors. A shoeless house can make a tremendous difference. Remember, how often you sweep or vacuum and what you use to mop your floors will determine the longevity of your floor's finish as well as the level of pollution in your home.

### **Sources:**

- 6 Natural Wood Floor Cleaners
- 5 Benefits of Cleaning Wood Floors with Tea
- Natural Floor Cleaning: Easy Greening
- Homemade Floor Cleaner Recipe
- Build Direct