

# West Coast Maintenance Materials Co.

337 S. Western Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90020  
Phone: 213-387-2245 | Fax: 213-387-8197 | Email: info@westcoastmm.com

## How to Strip and Wax a Floor

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Purchase a floor finish stripper that is appropriate for your floor. To make your job easier, select a stripper that does not require rinsing and is "Tera Choice" (Canada) or "Green Seal" (USA) certified.

For best results, use a floor finish stripper that is the same brand as the floor wax you typically use. Buy or rent an electric floor scrubber and a wet-dry vacuum to reduce the elbow grease required. The heavier machine you can get, the easier the task of stripping the floor finish (& sealer if that is the case) will be. The floor scrubber scrubs away sealers and floor finish, and the wet-dry vacuum will suck up the stripper and sealer/floor finish residue afterward.

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Gather your supplies.

Remove any furniture, area rugs or pet food bowls from the area. Sweep or vacuum away any dust, crumbs or loose dirt.

Test the stripper on a part of the floor that is not readily visible before you get started. Some older linoleum floors cannot withstand stripping and the color may bleed.

Determine your plan of attack. You'll want to start in the corner that is farthest from an exit and work your way toward the exit. If you are doing this by hand, plan to strip 2-by-4-foot (60-by-120-cm) sections of the floor. If you are using a floor scrubber, you can strip larger sections-generally 100 square feet at a time.

Fill one bucket with the floor finish stripper. Dilute it according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Put all of your scrubbers, scrapers and tools in another bucket.

Bring all three buckets to the corner of the room that you plan to use as your starting point.

Use the mop to cover two 2-by-4-foot (60-by-120-cm) sections of the floor with the wax stripper. Apply enough stripper to coat the area thoroughly but not so much that it floods the area and soaks between seams or cracks. Apply stripper more liberally in areas with a lot of buildup.

Allow the stripper to soak according to instructions, then use the scrub pads (with the floor scrubber if one is available) to scrape away the wax buildup in one of the sections while you leave the other section to soak.

Use the toothbrush to scrub nooks and crannies and the putty knife to scrape away gobs or multiple finish layers in corners.

Use the squeegee to scoop the wax residue and stripper into the dustpan. Soak up excess liquid with rags or the mop. Dump all of this into the third bucket. (Or simply suck the residue up with a wet-dry vacuum if you have one.)

Apply stripper to a third 2-by-4-foot (60-by-120-cm) section before you begin scrubbing the second section, so the stripper can soak in and do its work while you scrub the second section.

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Alternate sections like this until you complete the floor. Make sure to strip the baseboards if they need it. Always apply stripper to the second-to-next section so that the stripper can soak into the wax while you scrub the other section but be aware of the potential of stripper "dry back" which is difficult to remove if the stripper is allowed to dry out.

If you encounter a section where you can't scrub away all of the buildup, remove what you can and then reapply the stripper. Allow it to soak in while you work on another section and then scrub it again.

Mop the floor if you used a stripper that requires rinsing.

Allow the floor to dry thoroughly. Place a fan near the floor to accelerate the drying process if necessary.

Apply sealer (generally 2 coats) and floor finish (generally 3 coats) as soon as the floor is dry to provide a protective coat. Apply wax sparingly to avoid future wax buildups.

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## Tips

Apply thin multiple thin coats of floor finish. Let cure overnight, then burnish the floor with a high speed machine 1500 + RPM.

Remember, 5 total coats is still thinner than a piece of waxed paper.

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## Warnings

Test floor stripper on older tile floors that contain Asbestos. If you have Asbestos tile floors, use a strong safe degreaser to just top scrub the floor

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## Things You'll Need

- Rubber Gloves
- Goggles
- Stripper
- A Cotton Mop (rayon blends work well also)
- Several Scrub Pads (black is preferred)
- Toothbrush
- Putty Knife
- Floor Squeegee (or a window squeegee)
- A Plastic Dustpan
- Rags
- Three Buckets (You won't need the squeegee, dustpan and rags if you use a wet-dry vacuum.)