

Gym Floor Care

How do we keep our gym floors looking great day after day? This is always a topic of interest to every hard working custodian.

Day after day, class after class, activity after activity, muddy sneakers, slushy boots, soda, gum, and food spills attack your gym floor. However, at “tip off” everyone expects the gym floor to look perfect!

How will we ever keep up?

A little bit at a time.

Sweep the floor as often as possible. Dirt, sand, and grit act like sand paper under the students shoes. As often as you possibly can, sweep the floor. After every class, if you have the staff to do it. Sweeping or dust mopping is the single most important aspect of gym floor maintenance.

The gym floor dust mop

If the dust mop is the most important tool in the gym floor care “bag of tricks” then it stands to reason that keeping your dust mop in great condition is a top priority. Make sure to launder the cloth portion 2-3 times a week! Keep your dust mop off of the floor hanging on a hook in a back hall or in a back corner, out of the way, but handy for all your gym users to use. Encourage everyone who uses the gym to dust mop the floor after they use it. This includes the Physical Education teachers, the coaches, Community users, the band, the Choir, and so on. If you use the gym, then it is your responsibility to dust mop the floor afterwards.

The tennis ball on a stick

This may be the oldest trick in the in the gym floor book, but it works, so that is why it is still around. Cut a small hole in a tennis ball, insert a broom handle and you are set to become a floor mark removing machine. Just walk around your gym floor and scrub out the shoe marks! It’s not real glamorous, but it WORKS!

Damp mopping the gym floor

2-3 times per week your floor will need to be damp mopped. Use PH Neutral cleaner, in the mop bucket, wring out the mop to get as much of the water out as possible. Mop the entire floor walking backwards, pay special attention to the key areas, and areas under the bleachers.

Annual Maintenance coat

Most gyms are recoated every year. These Maintenance coats add layers of finish to the floor; which provides additional protection to your floor, and covers up some of the scratches and blemishes. To prep for the annual maintenance coat the floors need to be thoroughly cleaned and screened. The screening process is critically important especially when recoating with oil modified finish, because the oil modified

finish needs the scratches or “tooth” in the existing finish to bond. Water based finish seems to bond better with less screening, however all scuff marks, black marks, or large blemishes still have to be removed from the floor or they will be covered up with finish and impossible to get out until the floor is re sanded.



*In this photo we are in the process of screening the floor and repainting a logo at Wyoming Indian High School. Note how thoroughly we have screened this floor, in the area where we are working on the logo. Prior to recoating this floor we will finish screening the entire floor. It is really critical to remove all the marks and scuffs on a floor prior to applying the finish or they will be on your floor a **Long time!***

Water based vs Oil Modified finish

Both types of finish have pro's and con's. Oil Modified finish generally has a higher solids content and many gym floor professionals like to use Oil based finish for a couple of years right after the floor has been installed or sanded, to build up a “base” on the floor. Oil Modified finish is also cheaper than Water based finish, about ½ the cost or less. Oil based finish tends to yellow with time and will turn light colored paint dark after several recoats. Oil based finish tends to “stink” up the whole school as the

solvents gas off during the curing process. Oil based finish needs 10 days to 2 weeks before the gym can be reopened after application.

Water based finish is more expensive than Oil based, Water based finish dries crystal clear and will not discolor game lines or logo's. Water based finish dries quickly, (it can usually be carefully walked on in a couple hours) and the gym can be returned to full use 48 to 72 hours after application. Water based finish can be applied over oil based finish.



We have 10 coats of water based finish over this large white logo at the Jackson Hole High School gym, and it still retains a nice bright white color

Sanding and repainting the floor

There comes a point when maintenance and recoats just don't seem to help your floor much anymore. After 8-10 years to heavy use and annual maintenance coats it may be time for a re sanding. Removing years of grit, grime, and oxidized finish will lighten and brighten your entire gym.



Sanding a gym floor is a big job that takes big equipment, our riding sanders really help to speed up the process. We sometimes make our first “cut” at a diagonal to flatten out the floor.

The School gym is the focal point for the entire community. Over 90% of everyone who visits your school will be coming to the gym. How your gym looks is a reflection of your entire school. Your job as a custodian is incredibly difficult and often thankless! Hopefully some of these tips can help a little bit.

If we can ever answer questions about the care or maintenance of your gym floors, please give us a call.

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