

What Color **SHOULD I STAIN** MY HARDWOOD FLOORS?

James Kramer | Delaware Valley Hardwoods

ONE OF THE QUESTIONS WE GET ASKED MOST OFTEN IS: “SHOULD I STAIN MY FLOOR?” IT IS USUALLY FOLLOWED UP BY: “WHAT STAIN COLOR SHOULD I CHOOSE?” BECAUSE YOU WILL HAVE TO LIVE WITH ANY

decisions you make about the looks of your floors for a long time, you want to be 100% sure that if you do stain, you choose the perfect color. Once it has been finished, it's very costly and time consuming to redo it. Thankfully it's not too difficult to decide.

In this article, we'll go through 4 questions together that will help you decide whether you should stain your floors or not. If you do decide to stain, there's 2 additional questions to consider that will help you decide on the perfect color for your home.



Should You Stain, or Not?

Some floors are perfect candidates to be stained, others not so much. The following 4 questions will help you decide whether your floors should be stained or just left natural...

Question 1: What type of wood floors do you have?

If you're one of the fortunate ones to have an exotic or unique wood floor (think walnut, cherry, maple, mahogany etc.) then we strongly suggest keeping them unstained. These woods look beautiful in their natural state.

Often, when people stain their floors, they are trying to imitate these beautiful woods. If you already have this type of flooring, then you're the envy of many homeowners.

There's another reason to keep them as they are in their beautiful natural state... apart from not needing to be stained, many exotic woods don't take being stained well.

They can end up blotchy and uneven due to tight grain or oils in the wood.

Do you have an exotic wood floor or are they beautiful already without stain?

YES: (Decision made) Keep them as they are and enjoy them

NO: Keep reading

What if you don't have an exotic hardwood floor?

It's more than likely your home has the more common type of hardwood flooring in Delaware - red or white oak. If that's what you have, then you're a definite candidate to have your floors stained if you choose to.

Both red and white oak take staining extremely well if the proper techniques are used. And they both look really good stained.

Of course, they also look great in their natural state too. So what to do? That leads us to our next question...



CAN YOUR FLOOR BE STAINED?

Special wood floors, like this maple one, look great kept natural and coated with a clear finish. Which is good because they're also one of the hardest floors to stain.

Question 2: Do you prefer the look of natural oak floors?

If you answer NO, then changing the look and feel of them using a stain is a great solution.

In fact, this is the main reason that people choose to stain their floors.

Do you like natural oak floors?

YES: Keep them natural and enjoy them.
(Check with Questions 3 & 4 first)

NO: *(Decision made)* Have them stained.

NOTE: Even if you prefer to keep your oak floors natural, there are some circumstances where you may need to consider having them stained anyway.

The following 2 questions will run us through those scenarios...



DO YOU LIKE NATURAL OAK FLOORS?
Oak floors like the ones here, look great kept in their natural state — or not, depending on your taste.

Question 3: Do you have any water or pet urine damage?

If you rip up the carpet and discover water damage from pot plants, or the previous owner's cat or dog had a habit of urinating all over the floors, then you have 2 choices to make...

- Either the damaged sections of flooring will need to be removed and replaced, or
- You can stain the floor a dark color and try to hide the damage.

If you go with option 2 then how well they turn out will depend on how bad the damage is and how dark you go.

If there is extensive water or pet damage throughout the floors, but it's not too bad and could be blended in with a dark stain, then it's a viable option to consider.

Make sure you get a professional to assess the situation first.

Do you have water damaged floors?

YES: Staining could be a good choice.

NO: Check Question 4



DON'T LIKE AMBER FLOORS?
It's easy to change the look of your oak floors with staining and color effects—like the white hardwax oil applied to these red oak floors

Question 4: What type of finish are you going to use?

The kind of finish you plan to use on your oak floors has a huge effect on how it will look if kept natural.

Oil Based Finish:

Many people don't like the yellowy/orangey amber tint that naturally occurs with older oak floors. This look is often associated with older homes from the 1950's to 1980's.

Most hardwood floors back then were coated with oil-based finish. Over time, sunlight (UV rays) have discolored them, turning them that yellowish amber shade.

If you plan to use an oil-based finish and don't want that look down the road, then staining your floor before coating it is well worth considering. The finish will still amber but it won't be anywhere near as noticeable.

Water Based Finish

If you plan to use a water-based finishing system on your oak floor, then there's a different issue to be aware of.

Water based finishes have no color, they dry completely clear. When they're applied on sanded oak floors, you get a really washed out look.

You have a couple of options...

- Apply a tinted sealer first to give the rich, deep look of an oil-based finish, then apply the water based finish, or

- Stain your floors a different color first and then apply the water-based finish. This way you get the look you want and the clear top coats will lock it in.

Hardwax Oil

The third option is to go with a hardwax oil finish.

Many of these specialty finishes have the color built into them so you get the color and finish coat all in one.

There are also numerous options for pre-treatments and stains to be used underneath them to get extra layers of color and cool effects.

They look amazing on white and red oak floors and there is a HUGE color range to choose from.

What finish will you be using?

OIL BASED: If you don't like the yellowish amber look... stain them.

WATER BASED: Definitely stain (or use a tinted sealer)

HARDWAX OIL: Color is built in to the finish (for most) but can be stained for extra effects.

If after answering these questions you have decided that staining your hardwood floor is the best choice, you have another important question to answer...

What Color Stain Should I Choose?

Selecting a stain color is probably the toughest decision you'll have to make for your floor restoration project.

Choices, choices, choices. There are so many colors and shades to choose between it can get a bit overwhelming.

Hopefully the following 2 questions will make the choice somewhat easier as you narrow down your selection...

Question 1: What interior decorating style do you have?

If you have a specific style of interior design in mind, it will be a huge help in deciding on a stain color.

For example, if you want a country or farmhouse interior design theme, then you won't want to stain your floors Ebony as it would clash with your rustic furniture. You would go for a stain like Early American or Colonial Maple.

On the other hand, if your interior design is a modern contemporary style, Sedona Red would look completely out of place. Ebony or a modern gray shade may be a better choice.

Find a color that will highlight the interior design you're going with. You want a shade that will ground the rooms styling and compliment your décor.

Because many of us can't visualize things in our heads, a good idea is to gather together some interior design, architecture and home improvement magazines for inspiration.

There are plenty of great online sources of help too, like Pinterest, Instagram and Houzz.

Look through them and see what others, especially professional designers, have done in similar situations to what you envision.

What grabs your eye? Do you like the light, airy, clean look of a lighter colored floor? Or do you prefer the deep, elegant and bold look of a dark floor? Maybe you like the reddish-brown shades in between these two ends of the color spectrum.

When you find something you like, save it to show your flooring professional. They'll be able to help you come up with a similar color.



NEED SOME COLOR INSPIRATION?

These are just some of the color choices available in the Rubio Monocoat hardwax oil range. Once you start to add their pre-color treatments, the range is unlimited.



CONSIDERING A DARK FLOOR?

Staining your floors dark will ground the room, giving it depth. Keep in mind that cleaning them will take more effort than lighter floors.

Question 2: Should I choose a dark or light stained floor?

Excellent question. Let's divide this into 2 sections: Looks and Functionality.

Looks:

This is quite subjective and will depend a lot on your wall color, but we'll talk about basic design principles here...

- In general, lighter colored floors are a good option for small, dark rooms that don't have much natural light. They will brighten up the room, making it seem larger. Dark floors absorb the light and have a way of making a room feel smaller than it otherwise would.

- Lighter stain colors will highlight the natural grains in your floor, while still giving it some depth and color. Dark shades like Ebony will mute the grain in the wood and make the floor look more monotone and even.
- Dark stains will ground the room, make a bold statement and show off furniture more. Lighter floors will project an airy, more open feel.

Functionality:

- As we talked about previously, one of the reasons many people choose a dark stain is to hide imperfections and damage caused by pet urine or water stains.
- If you do choose a dark stained floor, realize that keeping them looking their best is going to be more challenging than with a lighter floor. Scratches and dust will be much more noticeable. Think about how everything shows up on a black car—the same goes for dark floors. If you have kids, pets or live in a dusty area, you will be cleaning up much more often. Lighter floors are much easier to maintain.

Additional Thoughts:

Try not to be too swayed by what's currently popular. This is ok with clothes, sunglasses and hairstyles as they can easily be changed or replaced. Changing the color of your wood floors once it's down isn't that easy, or convenient, or cheap.

Also remember, what's trendy now could be out of style in a year or two.

Five years ago, super dark floors were all the rage. Back in the 80's it was white-washed floors. Currently it's different shades of grey. Choose something that will look good and you'll be happy with long-term.

It's your home and you have to live with your floors for many years after the latest trend has moved on. A classic color that suites your interior design style is a better choice than choosing a short-term trendy color on a whim.

In Conclusion

Whether your preference is dark floors, light floors, reds, greys or brown, I'm certain you'll have no issue finding a color that perfectly matches the style of your home.

There are a LOT of colors and shades to choose from. When you start adding the new pre-treatments into the mix it multiplies your choice exponentially.

We suggest asking to see big samples of the colors you are considering. Put them down close to your furniture to see how they look together. Move them around your home.

Look at them during various times of the day and night. This will allow you to see them in different lighting and ensure you're happy with your choice.

If you need some extra help choosing a stain color we're here to help. If you would like to borrow some of our big samples, or even get us make some custom ones for your project, don't be shy to ask.

We'll be more than happy to lend our professional help in getting you the perfect color for your floors. □

Call or make a booking on our website to arrange your free in-home quote and stain color consultation:

PHONE: 302-396-4560

WEBSITE: delawarehardwoods.com



DELAWARE VALLEY
HARDWOODS

Call Today to Discuss the
Perfect Stain Color for Your Floors