

# Information sheet

## Cleaning and maintenance of laminate flooring in commercial areas

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### Area of validity

This information sheet is intended for laminate floors in accordance with EN 13329, introduced in accordance with the VOB (Regulations and stipulations for building), ATV (General technical regulations) DIN 18 365 "Flooring Covering Work" and provides general information regarding cleaning and maintenance of laminate flooring.

It is imperative that all instructions and information provided by manufacturers of laminate flooring or contained in the technical information sheets provided by the manufacturers and/or instructions for cleaning and maintenance are adhered to.

Here, the information sheet represents a supplementary source for the cleaning and maintenance of laminate flooring and provides the customer with specialist information regarding the handling of flooring of this kind.

A prerequisite for perfect laminate flooring and unrestricted use is the professional laying in accordance with the recognised rules of the trade and under consideration of the state of the art – we refer to the information sheet "Laying laminate flooring" (published by and available from EPLF e.V., Bielefeld).

### Surface characteristics, use and environment

Due to its material-specific characteristics, laminate flooring can generally be classed as low-maintenance and has a robust and particularly hygienic surface. It is abrasion-proof, resistant and, to the greatest extent, insensitive to mechanical and chemo-physical wear-and-tear that occurs in normal households, as long as the measures, particularly those regarding soiling minimisation, described in the following are adhered to.

The first prerequisite for maintaining laminate flooring and the, in general, problem-free, easy maintenance of this type of flooring is ensuring certain ambient conditions. A pleasant atmosphere, a comfortable climate for people and to maintain laminate flooring requires a certain constant, healthy atmosphere: an ambient temperature of 18-25 °C with a relative humidity of 40-70% represents the ideal atmosphere and positively influences the product-typical characteristics of laminate flooring.

As a natural product, wooden sheeting used as underlay for laminate flooring tends to expand and shrink under the influence of moisture, commonly described as "warping".

In the event of greater humidity, laminate flooring has the tendency to swell – lower humidity levels (in the case of air-conditioning and under-floor heating) can make the laminate flooring shrink, whereby the joins will become more visible.

During the heating season it may be necessary to use humidifiers to achieve sufficient air humidity.

### Before laying – preventative measures and planning notes when conducting flooring work

All flooring is subject to natural wear and tear that depends on the quality of the flooring and its utilisation – the most effective measure to maintain laminate flooring is the avoidance of dirt.

Most dirt is dragged in from outside and is deposited on the surface of the laminate flooring. Commercial premises, in particular, are frequented every day by numerous people, subjecting the flooring to moisture and dirt. Moisture and dirt will increase depending on the utilisation of the flooring – and this will leave its mark on all flooring, influence the value of the flooring and increase the cost for cleaning. For this reason, it is advisable to reduce dirt accumulation to the greatest possible extent. Here, planning and installing dirt catchment and shoe cleaning zones is awarded particular significance.

This measure prevents premature soiling of flooring and averts excessive wear to the surface of the laminate flooring and even damage caused by dirt on the soles of shoes (e.g. gravel, stones, etc. are ground between the shoe and surface of the flooring when the person turns and moves, resulting in scratches on the surface!).

For entrances close to soil, dirt catchment areas such as rubber mats or combined brush anti-slip strips made of rubber with special textile floor covering (e.g. polyamide filaments in polypropylene carriers) have proven useful, which act as coarse dirt removers in floor frames which are flush with the laminate flooring. Alternatively, gratings (for shoes) or doormats (sisal or coconut mats) can be used. These external coarse dirt catchment areas should be followed by internal dirt catchment areas, e.g. dirt sluices or dirt mats.

These interior dirt catchment areas should be at least three strides long (approx. 1.5 m).

Dirt sluices and dirt catchment areas must also be cleaned regularly – only then will they fulfil their function and help maintain the laminate flooring in the long-term.



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To prevent dirt and moisture, there should also be doormats (e.g. coconut mats/ribbed mats) textile mats or plastic mats to remove coarse dirt in residential households as well.

Chair and furniture legs with sharp metal stops and concentrated loads (table legs, cabinet feet) are to be fitted with felt to allow for smooth shifting and to prevent any mechanical damage.

Castors for office chairs, mobile filing cabinets or similar must be equipped with soft castors in accordance with DIN 68 131 – these can be recognised by their two-tone structure. Existing hard or sharp-edged castors must be replaced with soft castors (or equipped with protective nets).

### After laying – cleaning following installation

Mechanical wear-and-tear, intensive utilisation and the initial cleaning of laminate flooring that has been glued or stuck to the floor should not take place for the first 12 hours to prevent the glue being disturbed during the drying phase which may have adverse effects on the laminate flooring (particularly the tongue and groove system). You must abide by the information regarding the drying phase specified by the glue manufacturer.

Within the context of the post installation cleaning, you must remove all sawdust, dust and dirt using a vacuum cleaner.

We recommend using a special laminate flooring cleaning agent for basic cleaning, whereby the surface is only wiped down with a damp cloth (this must have been wrung out so that the cloth is only slightly damp). Using this technique, you will be able to remove normal soiling inside new buildings or newly laid flooring. This phase should be followed by wiping over the cleaned surface with a dry cloth.

Should the surface contain stubborn soiling or if there is any glue residue visible following the laying of the laminate flooring and basic cleaning, we recommend using special laminate glue remover – however, this should be carefully dosed and be used in according with the cleaner manufacturer's instructions.

However, only the affected area (joint) should be treated with the cleaner and be rubbed down after a short period (no more than a few minutes) with a white, scratch-free pad – residue (cleaner and loose glue) must be removed with an absorbent fabric cloth. Then, using a cloth that has previously been rinsed in clean water and wrung out, the entire surface must be wiped

down using a laminate floor cleaner (the cloth must be only slightly damp).

Please adhere to the following cleaning information.

### Cleaning agents

In principle, laminate flooring is easy to clean. But dirt and stains are not always easily removed using water. Therefore, we recommend using special laminate floor cleaners.

Washing and soft soaps must not be used as they create a film and leave dirt on the surface of laminate flooring.

Glue and stain removers contain higher concentrations of special solvents and should therefore only be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instruction and only for the affected areas.

Polymer cleaners that create a film on the surface and waxes must not be used for laminate flooring – e.g. floor polish or special polish, commonly used for wooden floors must not be used for laminate flooring.

### General cleaning – cleaning in residential areas

All floors are subject to natural wear-and-tear, which generally depends on the quality and utilisation of the flooring – regular cleaning helps maintain the condition and life expectancy of laminate flooring.

Due to its highly impervious, chemically bonded surface, laminate flooring in general does not require any initial treatment with cleaning agents that create a film on the surface.

**Special notice:** cleaning agents that form a film on the surface or wax, soft or washing soap are unable to enter through the dense surface of laminate flooring and they adhere to the surface either badly or not at all – therefore, using these will create unattractive stains, smears or tracks.

First, we recommend cleaning the surface with a vacuum cleaner or (in residential areas) with a dry mop.

Loose surface dirt and coarse dirt can be removed using specially impregnated dusting cloths (however,



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using these impregnated dusting cloths every day can lead to a film forming on the surface which results in increased dirt adherence on the laminate flooring).

Using a brush or dustpan and brush is not advisable as they simply disperse the dust and dirt in the air, which will settle in the floor again once you have finished!

To remove dirt dragged in from outside and stubborn dirt we recommend for residential areas with low utilisation and low dirt generation wiping the floor with a slightly damp cloth, adding some suitable laminate floor cleaner to the otherwise clean water.

Here, use cloths that have been rinsed in water and then well wrung (not dripping).

Utilisation-related stains, heel marks from shoe soles, coloured pens and other dirt can be removed as described in the following table.

Steam cleaner must not be used – the hot steam has an adverse effect on the glue!

### General cleaning – cleaning for commercial areas

Due to the greater utilisation, the resulting increased soiling in commercial areas (contact soiling and/or utilisation-related soiling) is normally unavoidable.

Here, we recommend the following measures depending on the intensity and type of dirt:

a) **Loose dirt**

Loose dirt must be removed using the vacuum cleaner!

b) **Stubborn dirt**

Two-step cleaning ⇒ neutral cleaner, alcohol cleaner (please read the laminate flooring

manufacturer's recommendations) are applied to the surface of the laminate flooring with a cloth doused in the cleaning solution that has been wrung out but that is still damp.

In a second stage immediately following the first, the excess liquid on the surface containing the dirt must be removed with a cloth that has been rinsed in clean water and then wrung out, in other words the cloth must be only slightly damp. Then any residual moisture must be removed with a dry, absorbent cloth (preferably cotton)!

c) **Stain removal (e.g. felt-tip pens, use-related stains, heel marks caused by shoe soles, coloured pens and other stains)**

Here, manual stain removal is necessary, possibly using special cleaners containing solvents – however, only the affected area should be treated and only for short periods of time. In principle, do not use as much as possible, use as much as necessary, in other words use as little cleaning agent as possible as alcohol and solvents may damage the glue in the tongue and groove system!

The following stain removers are available on the market (see following table).

### Post-treatment of laminate flooring

Some manufacturers offer a special edging and groove impregnator for subsequent protection or subsequent impregnation of joints. If you use one of these, please carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions.

**In general, it is advisable not to use cleaning agents containing solvents.**

You must follow the special maintenance instruction and the corresponding recommendations for using cleaners provided by the manufacturers of laminate flooring.

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**Table: removing stains from laminate flooring**

<b>Soiling</b>	<b>Can be removed with...</b>
Rubber marks, heel marks, street dirt, coloured pens, oil crayons	Brush off when dry, i.e. with a white nylon pad.
Fruit, berries, milk, beer, wine, tea, soft drinks	Immediately wipe down with absorbent cloth or, when dry, wipe down with a suitable laminate flooring cleaner and then wipe dry.
Urine, blood	Immediately wipe down with damp cloth, rub down if dry with a dry nylon pad, wipe down residue with a suitable laminate flooring cleaner and then wipe dry .
Felt pens, ink, lipsticks, carbon paper, nail varnish, show polish, paint, oil, tar, typewriter ribbon, grease	Wipe down with a cloth soaked in a solvent, i.e. acetone, vinegar essence, nail polish remover, paint thinner – be very careful: only use a small amount of solvent in the stained area. Read the safety notice!
Chocolate, grease films, cooking oil	With suitable laminate flooring cleaners.

The information contained in this information sheet may not be complete and has been compiled in good faith and in accordance with the state-of-the-art.

The information is designed as additional information for the cleaning and maintenance recommendations of laminate flooring manufacturers and is not legally binding.

The information does not release the layer/consumer from cleaning attempts – guarantee claims do not arise from this information!

Should you have any doubts concerning this matter, we recommend contacting the manufacturer/supplier of the laminate flooring.

This information sheet was compiled by the EPLF's technology workgroup in conjunction with the iba-Institut, Koblenz.