



Sanding Timber Floors

New or old timber floorboards can be sanded to a smooth finish ready for coating. Ensure that the floors are traditional boards and not floating floors before sanding. Floating floors have a thin timber veneer which can vary in thickness. Thin timber veneers can easily be removed by a sanding machine which will destroy the floor.

1. Before you start

- Ensure that floor boards are completely dry before sanding.
- Skirting boards do not need to be removed if sufficient care is taken while sanding.
- Remove all furniture and pictures on the walls.
- Remove or completely wrap curtains and blinds in plastic to prevent damage from the fine sanding dust.
- Cover heating vents, power points and ducts with duct tape and heavy plastic.
- Cover doorways to rooms that are not going to be sanded with plastic dust barriers or heavy drop sheets and duct tape to prevent the sanding dust from entering these rooms.
- Punch exposed nail heads in the floors with a nail punch and hammer 3mm below the surface, as exposed nails will quickly shred sandpaper.
- Clean all sticky coatings (such as vinyl glue) from the floor surface as this will quickly clog the sandpaper.
- A drum sander and an edge sander are required to sand timber floors which can be hired from some hardware retailers or hire outlets.
- When hiring the floor sanders obtain information regarding how to install the sand paper on the sanding belts and how to operate the machine.
- Drum sanders are used for sanding the main area of the floors and the edge sanders are used for sanding the edges of the room.
- Wear a dust mask when sanding as a considerable amount of fine dust is created. Wearing eye goggles or safety glasses is also recommended.
- Open windows for ventilation.

What is the sandpaper grit?

The sandpaper grit number is the grade of the sandpaper, or, how coarse or fine the grit is. The higher the grade the finer the sandpaper.

Grit	Grade	Use
40-60	Very Coarse/Coarse	Use coarse sandpaper to removing old coating and smoothing out imperfections. This grit is not recommended for soft timbers such as Baltic pine.
80	Medium	Use medium sandpaper for smoothing out shallow depressions, scratches and coarse sanding marks.
100-180	Fine	Use fine sandpaper for removing light scratches, medium sanding marks and final surface preparation for coating.
220-280	Very fine	Use fine sandpaper for sanding in-between coats of floor finishes.
320-1200	Extra/Ultra fine	Use ultra fine sandpaper for sanding in-between coats of varnishes for achieving a fine finish (not required for floor finishes).

2. Coarse Sand – 40 grit sandpaper

- Using the drum sander with 40 grit sandpaper start in a corner of the room and work on the diagonal so the machine sands on a 45 degree angle to the length of the boards.
- Tilt the handle of the machine so that the sanding belt is NOT touching the floor (if the machine is started with the sanding belt touching the floor then the timber will be gouged, resulting in a mark that is difficult to remove).
- Turn the machine on and push it forward slowly lowering the sanding belt.
- Do NOT stop the machine with the sanding belt on the floor, always raise it first.
- Push the machine across the floor raising the sanding belt when the wall is reached.
- Push the machine as close to the wall as possible and pull the machine backwards on the diagonal overlapping the first sanded strip by approximately 75mm.
- When removing old coatings the above process may have to be repeated two or three times to ensure the coating is thoroughly removed.
- Always move the machine slowly and steadily.
- Repeat the procedure until the entire floor is sanded.
- Sand the edges of the floor with the edge sander using 40 grit sandpaper.
- Use a scraper or a block with 40 grit sandpaper wrapped around it to sand the corners where the edge sander cannot reach.
- Sweep and vacuum the floors and skirting boards to remove the dust.

3. Medium Sand – 80 grit sandpaper

- Change the machine's sandpaper to 80 grit.
- Starting in the corner work the machine along the floor boards in the direction of the timber grain, NOT on the diagonal.
- As before, tilt the handle of the machine so that the sanding belt is NOT touching the floor
- Turn the machine on and push it forward slowly lowering the sanding belt.
- Do NOT stop the machine with the sanding belt on the floor, always raise it first.
- Push the machine across the floor raising the sanding belt when the wall is reached.
- Push the machine as close to the wall as possible and pull the machine backwards along the boards overlapping the first sanded strip by approximately 75mm.
- Repeat the procedure until the entire floor is sanded.
- Sand the edges of the floor with the edge sander using 80 grit sandpaper.
- Use a block with 80 grit sandpaper wrapped around it to sand the corners where the Edge sander cannot reach. The floor should now be smooth.
- Sweep and vacuum the floors and skirting boards to remove the dust.
- Fill nail holes and small gaps with **Feast Watson Timberfill Putty**.
- If using a clear floor finish, fill nail holes after the first coat to avoid smearing.
- Several colours of **Timberfill Putty** can be mixed to achieve the closest possible colour to the timber.

4. Fine Sand – 120 grit sandpaper

- To finish, change the drum sander and edge sander's sandpaper to 120 grit.
- An orbital sander can be used instead of an edge sander for the rooms edges.
- Follow the same method as the Medium Sand step sanding along the boards.
- Sweep and vacuum the floors and skirting boards to remove the dust.
- Vacuum the dust which has settled on the tops of window and door frames and other ledges such as picture rails.
- Wipe down the walls and ceilings with a damp cloth.
- Removing as much of the dust as possible will ensure that the floor coating will be as smooth as possible as remaining dust will settle on the wet surface.
- Finally, ensure the entire surface of the timber is dry and free from dirt, oil and grease before coating.



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