GUIDE FOR HOME SELLERS AND BUYERS

Floors That Sell

Selling a home? Which floors to clean, recoat, refinish or replace before listing, the timeline that gets it done before the photos, and what to disclose. Buying one? How to read the floors before you make an offer.

8 chapters | Refresh, refinish or replace | Pre-listing timeline | Buyer's floor checklist

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What's inside

Floors are in almost every listing photo, and buyers walk on them in every showing. A few well-chosen floor projects can change how a home photographs, shows and sells. The wrong ones just cost money.

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Floors in listing photos and showings, and what reads as "move-in ready" or "project"

02 **Refresh, refinish or replace?**
The decision for every floor type, and what the remodeling research says pays back

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How to check for it in ten minutes, and why it can be the best-value project in the house

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Room-by-room floor scorecard · Pre-listing timeline · Buyer's floor inspection checklist · Questions for the seller

About this guide

This guide was written by Vision Flooring LLC, a flooring company in Everett, Washington, led by owner Alex Babko. We have 20+ years of experience and 3,800+ clients behind us. Hardwood refinishing and installation, LVP, laminate, baseboards and floor repair after water damage are our everyday work, and this guide is what we explain to homeowners at their kitchen tables, written down so you can keep it.

This guide is about floors, from a flooring contractor's point of view. Pricing your home, what to fix and what to disclose are decisions to make with your real estate agent, and with an attorney where legal questions come up. Disclosure rules differ by state; we use Washington's as the example.

> ⚠ **General information, not a substitute for your instructions**
> Every home, floor and product is different. Your flooring and product manufacturers' instructions, your local building codes and your insurance policy always come first; where they differ from this guide, follow them. Work safely and call a licensed professional for anything you are not sure about.

How to use it

- Read it once start to finish (about an hour), then keep it handy. Every chapter has **"The short version"**: its key points in a few lines.
- Boxes marked **Pacific Northwest note** matter most in damp climates like ours; they are good practice anywhere.
- The worksheets at the back are made to print on letter paper. The spreadsheet that comes with this guide does the math for you.

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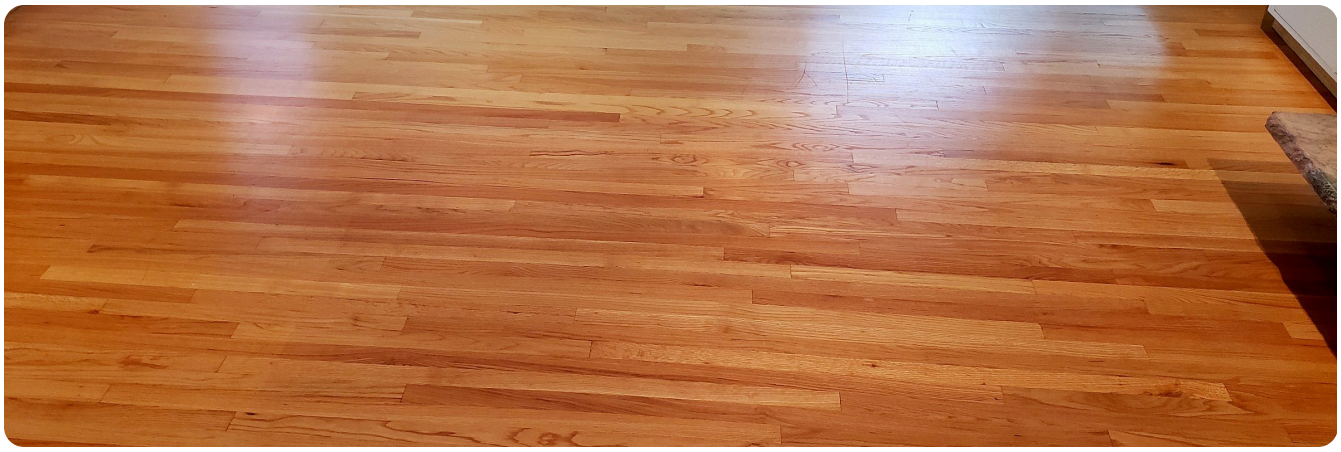

CHAPTER

01

What buyers notice

Buyers judge a home in seconds, first in photos, then in the doorway. Floors cover most of what they see. Worn, stained or mismatched floors say “project” and “money”; clean, consistent floors say “cared for.”

THE SHORT VERSION

- Floors are in nearly every listing photo; wear, stains and dated carpet show up more in photos than in person.
- Buyers mentally subtract the cost of anything that looks like a project, and they tend to guess high.
- Consistency matters: one tired room makes the others look tired too.
- Smell is part of the floor: pet odor in carpet or under planks can turn buyers away at the door.

What reads as “move-in ready”

Helps the sale

- ✓ Clean, even floors with no dull traffic lanes
- ✓ The same floor flowing through the main rooms
- ✓ Neutral, natural wood tones
- ✓ Hardwood where buyers expect it, uncovered and refinished
- ✓ Clean transitions at doorways, intact baseboards

Hurts the sale

- ✗ Worn, gray traffic paths and deep scratches
- ✗ Dark pet stains, swollen laminate seams, lifting planks
- ✗ Dated or stained carpet, especially over hardwood
- ✗ Four different floors in one open space
- ✗ Pet odor, and soft or squeaky spots

The “project discount”

When buyers see work to be done, most don’t price it the way a contractor would. They guess, round up, add the hassle, and lower their offer or move on to the next house. Fixing the visible floor problems before listing takes that guess away. The question is which projects are worth it, and that is what the next chapter answers.

Walk your house like a buyer

Take photos of each room from the doorway with your phone, the way a listing photographer would. Look at the floors in the photos, not in person: worn lanes, stains and color differences stand out more. Score each room on the Room-by-room floor scorecard at the back.

CHAPTER

02

Refresh, refinish or replace?

Every floor has a cheapest option that solves its problem. Start there, and only go further when the cheaper fix won't do the job.

THE SHORT VERSION

- Hardwood: clean, then recoat, then refinish; replace only what is truly damaged.
- In NAR and NARI's 2022 Remodeling Impact Report, refinishing hardwood was estimated to return more than its cost at resale.
- Carpet: clean if it is newish; replace or remove (if hardwood is under it) if it is dated or stained.
- Vinyl plank and laminate: replace damaged planks; replacing a whole floor is rarely worth it just to sell.

FLOOR	REFRESH (CHEAPEST)	REPAIR OR REFINISH	REPLACE (ONLY IF...)
Site-finished hardwood	Deep clean with a wood floor cleaner	Screen and recoat if the finish is dull but intact; sand and refinish if worn to the wood, scratched or stained	...boards are damaged by water or pets; then replace those boards and refinish to blend
Prefinished or engineered hardwood	Deep clean	Replace damaged boards; solid prefinished can be refinished, most engineered can't (thin top layer)	...damage is widespread and boards can't be replaced or refinished
Carpet	Professional cleaning	Patch small damage	...it is dated, stained or smells; or remove it if hardwood is underneath (Chapter 3)
LVP / laminate	Clean with a hard-surface cleaner	Replace damaged planks (spares from the same lot)	...laminate is swollen across a room, or the floor is failing
Tile	Clean, and clean or refresh grout	Replace cracked tiles if matches exist	...it is badly damaged or very dated in a key room

What the research says

Every few years the National Association of REALTORS® and the National Association of the Remodeling Industry publish a Remodeling Impact Report that estimates how much of a project's cost is recovered at resale. In the 2022 edition, **refinishing hardwood floors** was estimated to recover about **147%** of its cost, and **new wood flooring** about **118%**, among the highest of the interior projects. These are national estimates for typical projects, not a promise for your house, and later editions may differ. Ask your agent how they see it in your market.

The same living room before and after the hardwood floor was sanded and refinished, photographed from the same spot.

END OF THE FREE SAMPLE

Floors That Sell

You just read a few pages. The complete version has everything below, with every worksheet and the spreadsheet.

- ✓ What buyers notice in listing photos and showings, and the “project discount”
- ✓ Refresh, refinish or replace, for every floor type, with what remodeling research says pays back at resale
- ✓ The hardwood under the carpet: the ten-minute check and what decides whether it can be saved
- ✓ Colors and finishes that sell, and keeping the whole house consistent
- ✓ The pre-listing timeline: quotes, floor work, furniture and rug times, staging and photo day
- ✓ Water history and disclosures: documenting repairs and why honesty sells faster
- ✓ For buyers: reading the floors at a showing, and the questions to ask the seller

Get the full guide →

visionflooringllc.com/floors-that-sell · Instant download · PDF guide + pre-listing floor planner

Questions first? Text 425-218-4234; a real person answers.