



FIRST ON THE FLOOR

Ryan Greenawald, Marketing Director at Diversey, shows you how to ensure a good finish for your floors.

Today, school gymnasiums are increasingly being used for events beyond sports, such as religious gatherings, community fairs and fundraisers. Wood gymnasium floors must look their best and stand up to heavy foot traffic on a daily basis. Selecting the right type of floor finish is crucial for reducing downtime and maintaining the appearance of flooring assets.

To guide product selection, facility managers should understand several myths and misconceptions around floor finishes and the keys to successfully keeping floors looking beautiful.

1 MYTH: TODAY'S OIL-BASED COATINGS ARE THE SAME AS THOSE FROM THE PAST.

The formulation of oil-based finishes has changed as consumers and contractors sought out safer finishes. Containers that are gallon-sized and larger now have a 'VOC Compliant' tag. Although the reformulation made finishes less harmful, it also sacrificed some of the durability. Over time, due to the viscosity of oil-based finishes, the oil on the bottom loses its ability to maintain the adhesion. This can result in peeling that impacts the appearance of floors.

2 MYTH: WATERBORNE FINISHES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN LESS DURABLE THAN OIL-BASED FINISHES.

When manufacturers initially introduced waterborne finishes, the quality and durability couldn't compare with the traditional oil-based lines, which gave them a bad reputation. They used to dry very quickly, making it difficult to properly level the finish. Waterborne finishes also used to de-gloss much faster. However, the product never came off the floor: it just lost its shine.

Today's waterborne finishes are now more advanced and can outlast the durability of oil by years while retaining oil's shine and build. The product also levels very well, providing facilities with an even finish.

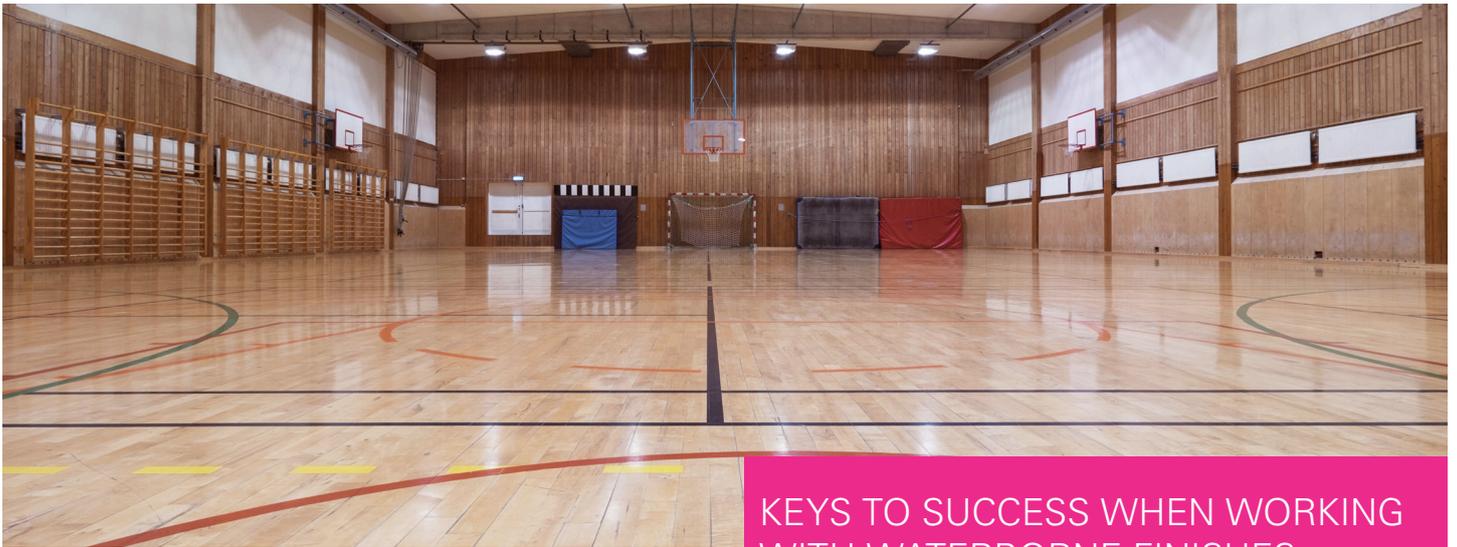
3 MYTH: THE THICKNESS OF THE PRODUCT IS KEY TO DURABILITY.

For durability, it's the quality of the polymer that is important, not the thickness of the product. The polymer in oil-based products requires a lot of viscosity and build to achieve durability, while water has extremely high-end polymers that do not require the same thickness to function just as well. Because water is so thin and relies on its quality of polymer, it does not have an adhesion issue and does not have to be removed or re-sanded to maintain that adhesion over time.

THE SHIFT FROM OIL

Waterborne finishes are becoming much more popular because they create attractive floors and the preparation, application and drying processes are easier and less time-consuming. With oil-based products, facilities must set aside a considerable amount of time, especially when working with 275 and 350 oil types. These take more time and effort to move across floors due to the product's viscosity. To level the thick finish, employees need a heavy T-bar and proper ventilation to release vapors emitted by the finish. It also requires more time and chemical to clean tools used with oil-based finishes.

When comparing dry times for finishes, there is a clear difference. Oil-based finishes require between eight and 36 hours to dry, depending on the product and the



environment. For example, a 450 oil needs eight hours, a 350 oil needs 24 hours and a 275 oil needs 36 hours under good environmental conditions.

After applying an oil-based finish, floors are usually ready to open for athletic use in 72 hours, but most facilities wait five days because of the longer dry times. There is no light duty window for these finishes and the total cure time is two to three weeks.

In most circumstances, waterborne finishes require three to four hours to dry, and are ready for light activity in 24 hours and ready for play in 48. There are few exceptions to this and extreme environmental circumstances would only affect the dry time, not the play time. The total cure time is always one week.

Although waterborne finishes have a slightly higher purchase price, they provide long term savings. Not only are water-finished floors usable sooner, but water doesn't require a full sanding at the same intervals as oil does. Water also has a lower environmental impact on facilities and air quality, and those applying the finish are working with a less toxic product.

Finally, waterborne products won't discolour floors. With oil-based finishes, there is a risk that white lines in the floor design will turn yellow or blue lines will become green.

TIME TO SHINE

Many communities use gymnasiums year-round for a wide variety of events. Thus, floor finishes need to be resilient, scratch resistant and applied in a timely manner. For many years, oil-based finishes were the go-to product for protecting floors because they were affordable and durable.

However, in recent years, many facilities have transitioned to waterborne finishes. The market now has top-of-the-line catalysed floor finishes that far surpass oil-based polyurethanes. These finishes are more eco-friendly, durable and convenient because they are waterborne, emit no toxic vapor, and dry fast. By understanding the differences between oil-based and waterborne finishes, floor finish myths and keys to success, facility managers can make a more informed decision about the right type of product for their wood floors.

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KEYS TO SUCCESS WHEN WORKING WITH WATERBORNE FINISHES

To achieve the desired look with waterborne finishes, consider the following:

- Abrade the existing oil-based finish: Before applying a waterborne finish, abrade the existing oil-based finish. This will ensure the waterborne finish adheres to the floor properly. Look for a waterborne finish that eliminates the need for wet systems during the abrasion process to further simplify this preparation step.
- Seek out a finish with a quality guarantee: The product should have a claim that it will adhere to the floor and not wear through for a specified time period, such as a minimum of one year. Ideally, the product should have testing claims to demonstrate its resistance to various types of contaminants that might be spilled in a gymnasium, such as soda, coffee and gum. This reassures facilities that floors can easily be repaired back to their usual quality level.
- Use the right tools: A lightweight T-bar rather than a heavyweight one should be used to apply a waterborne finish. Then, maintain the finish over time with dry microfibre to remove dust and other particles and wet microfibre to clean floors. Machines, including robotic models, can further simplify floorcare for employees.
- Select the right cleaning products: Use a product specifically designed for wood floor cleaning. The product should leave zero residue behind, as soils tracked onto the floors could stick to residues, and residues also make floors slippery. For the winter months, use a winter wood floor cleaner to help neutralise salts and other contaminants from ice melting products. Additionally, avoid putting treatments on dust mops, as these typically contain oils that can be transferred to floors. Additionally, avoid putting treatments on dust mops, as these typically contain oils that can be transferred to floors.
- Implement a consistent cleaning regimen: Clean floors every day to extend their lifespan and reduce maintenance and replacement costs down the line.