

Use a Doormat

The first thing you need to know when it comes to vinyl floor cleaner is how to prevent them from getting dirty in the first place. A doormat helps keep out your vinyl floor's two greatest enemies: dirt and chemicals. Tracked-in dirt means extra broom time. Grit acts like sandpaper, removing the finish from your floor. In addition, even though you cannot see them, chemicals from asphalt can stick first to your shoes and then to the floor, causing it to yellow.

Sweep frequently

The key to keeping any floor in good shape is to keep it clean, and sheet vinyl is no exception. Get the dirt off before it gets ground in, and your vinyl will last longer. It is a good idea to get in the habit of quickly running a soft broom across the kitchen floor every evening after you put the dishes in the dishwasher.

Learn low-impact cleaning techniques

Resist the temptation to blast away dirt with heavy-duty cleaners. Instead, learn how to clean vinyl floors using the mildest possible method. Sweep or vacuum it every evening, and wipe up spills right away. To clean dirt that the broom or vacuum can't get, use a mop dampened with warm—not hot—water. If all else fails, use soap, but make sure the soap is designed for your flooring.

Use the right cleanser

Here is how to clean vinyl floors made with no-wax vinyl: Wash them with a cleaner made specifically for no-wax floors, following the directions on the container. If you have older vinyl that requires waxing, clean it with warm water and detergent. Dampen a mop or sponge with the mixture, and rub the floor just enough to loosen the dirt. Try not to rub off the wax because you will just have to reapply it. Rinse with clean, cool water—no matter what the soap label says about not needing rinsing—otherwise you will leave a residue on the floor. Look out for the other cleaning mistakes that only make your home dirtier.

Don't drench your vinyl

It is important to remember that water is not always the best vinyl floor cleaner. Water from an overly wet mop will work its way into the cracks, seams, and edges. Once there, it can destroy the glue bond that holds down the vinyl, causing it to come loose or corners to curl.

Rinse well to remove all soap

Soap may work as a great vinyl floor cleaner, but soap scum leaves a film that actually collects dirt. Until your floor needs a serious cleaning, stick to damp mopping with just water. When you do need to wash the floor, use two mops—one for washing and a second one just for rinsing.

Preserve the sheen

“No wax” really means, “Don’t wax.” No-wax vinyl has a clear polyurethane coating that makes it shine. Wax will not adhere well to the coating and will leave behind a mess that you will have to strip off. (Do not use mop-and-wax products, either.) If your no-wax floor loses its shine, restore it with a polish or sealant made for no-wax flooring. Make sure the floor is thoroughly clean and apply one or two thin layers as directed. It should keep your floor shining for at least a year with only routine damp mopping. If you have an older floor that requires waxing, wax when it loses its sheen, but use only the amount called for on the container label. Check out these 16 cleaning hacks you will want to steal from professional house cleaners.

Outfit your furniture and large appliances with protective “feet”

The weight of heavy items (such as tables and refrigerators) that occupy permanent places in your kitchen can dent vinyl flooring. Prevent these dents by fitting your furniture with floor protectors, which you can find at hardware stores and home improvement centers.

Forgo rolling casters

These, too, can damage the surface of your tile. Instead, consider fitting chairs with felt tips, which will not harm your vinyl.

Before big moves, put appliances and other heavy items on a plywood path

More often than not, when we replace or move appliances, we drag or push them across the floor rather than lift them—but dragging them will only scratch and scuff your vinyl flooring. To keep your vinyl in tiptop condition, lay a piece of plywood sheeting along the route that you are going to take out of the room, and push or “walk” the appliances out along the plywood path.