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Comparison Table: Oil vs. Water-based Polyurethanes

Comparisons to help you select the right stain:

	Water-borne Polyurethane	Oil-based Polyurethane
Color impact	Lighter and clearer (not yellow)	Darker and more amber tone; darkens and yellows over time
Sheen level	Same sheens available as oil	Tends to have a higher luster look
Drying & curing time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dries faster (1-2 hours per coat) • Cures faster (24 hours) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dries in 4-6 hour per coat • Cures in 3-7 days
Odor	Less odor – dissipates faster	More odor – lingers longer
VOCs**	Lower than oil, meets all state requirements of less than 100 VOC levels	Higher (varies by brand), typically 250-375 VOC levels
Durability	Low durability – not good for homes with dogs.	High durability
Recommended for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maple natural (yellows less) • Grays and white washes (won't turn yellow) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darker stains (color has more depth and looks a bit darker) • Older woods with more imperfections
Sheen options	• Matte, Satin (most popular), Semi-Gloss, High Gloss	• Matte, Satin (most popular), Semi-Gloss, High Gloss

Time frame recommendations

How long until I can...	Water borne Polyurethane	Oil-based Polyurethane
Walk on floors with socks/no bare feet or shoes	12-24 hours	18-24 hours
Walk on floors with shoes	24-48 hours	48-72 hours
Put furniture & appliances back (excluding area rugs)	24 hours	2-4 days
Remove drop cloths or Masonite boards (ideal to remove at night)	2-3 days	2-3 days
Allow my dog to walk on floors (use doggie socks up to this point)	48-72 hours***	1 week***
Put back area rugs, dog beds, etc.	2 weeks**	15-30 days**
When will my floors be fully cured*?	1-2 weeks	15-45 days

*Cure time is the time it takes for the solvents and liquid carriers to evaporate from the finish, for the fumes and smell to stop being emitted and for the polyurethane to fully harden. Cure times will vary depending upon the type of polyurethane (oil, water, lacquer), as well as temperature, airflow and humidity levels.

** Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are organic chemicals that have a high vapor pressure at ordinary room temperature.

***Water base results is equally as durable as oil but it is also less forgiving with scratches; we recommend use of oil base in homes with dogs with nails.



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