

NEW BRUNSWICK FLOORING

Maintenance & Care

Floor cleaning, scratch repair, refinishing schedules,
humidity management, and longevity tips for NB
homes

18 Expert Answers from Floor IQ

newbrunswickflooring.com/construction-brain

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How do I protect new flooring during the rest of a NB home renovation when other trades are still working?

Protecting new flooring during ongoing renovation work requires strategic timing and proper covering systems, but in most cases it's better to install flooring last in your NB renovation sequence.

The smartest approach is **scheduling flooring installation after all other trades complete their messy work**. This means flooring goes in after electrical rough-in and finishing, plumbing installation, drywall hanging and mudding, painting, and cabinet installation. You'll avoid damage entirely and get better results since flooring contractors can work around finished elements for precise cuts and professional transitions.

However, sometimes renovation logistics require flooring installation while other work continues. **In NB's humid Maritime climate, this creates additional challenges** because covering materials can trap moisture against your new floors during our wet spring months or humid summers. Here's how to protect floors properly when other trades must continue working:

For Hard Surface Flooring (hardwood, laminate, LVP, tile), use breathable protection that won't trap moisture. Heavy-duty rosin paper (not plastic sheeting) works well for light foot traffic and protects against scratches and spills. For heavier construction traffic, use 1/4-inch masonite or plywood panels that distribute weight and prevent point loads from damaging click-lock connections or tile. Tape seams with painter's tape, not duct tape that leaves residue. Remove coverings daily if possible to allow air circulation, especially during NB's humid summer months when trapped moisture can cause mould growth under coverings.

For Carpet, plastic sheeting works since carpet needs protection from paint, drywall compound, and construction debris more than moisture concerns. Use 6-mil plastic with taped seams, but remove it frequently to prevent odour buildup. Consider delaying carpet installation until the very end since it's the most vulnerable to permanent staining and odour absorption from construction materials.

Critical timing considerations for NB renovations: Never install hardwood flooring during spring snowmelt season (April through June) when basement moisture levels peak and indoor humidity fluctuates wildly. The ideal flooring installation window in New Brunswick is late summer through fall when humidity stabilizes and heating systems aren't cycling on and off. If you must install flooring during active renovation, ensure your HVAC system maintains consistent temperature and humidity levels - hardwood and laminate are especially sensitive to rapid environmental changes during their first 30 days after installation.

When to Hire a Pro: Professional flooring contractors often refuse to install during active construction, and their warranties may be voided if floors are damaged by other trades. If your renovation timeline requires flooring

installation mid-project, discuss protection requirements with your flooring contractor upfront and get their recommended covering system in writing. Many pros will return after other trades finish to address any damage and apply final protective coatings.

The extra cost of scheduling flooring last is almost always less than repairing damage from ongoing construction work. Plan your NB renovation sequence to protect your flooring investment.

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Q2

How do I remove construction dust and debris from new flooring after a renovation in my New Brunswick home?

Post-renovation cleaning requires a systematic approach to protect your new flooring investment while removing all construction debris and fine dust particles. The specific cleaning method depends entirely on your flooring type, as using the wrong products or techniques can damage surfaces or void warranties.

Start with debris removal before any wet cleaning. Use a shop vacuum with a brush attachment to remove all loose debris, sawdust, and larger particles. For hardwood, engineered wood, and laminate floors, ensure the vacuum wheels are clean and won't scratch the surface. Never drag debris across the floor — this creates permanent scratches in wood finishes and wear layers.

Fine dust removal is the critical step that separates amateur from professional results. Construction dust in NB homes often contains drywall compound, wood particles, and concrete dust that becomes airborne during renovation work. This fine dust settles into every crevice and surface texture. Use a microfiber dust mop or electrostatic cloth to capture particles without redistributing them into the air. Work systematically from the farthest

corner toward your exit, overlapping each pass by 50%.

For **hardwood and engineered floors**, follow dust removal with a barely damp microfiber mop using only manufacturer-approved hardwood cleaners. Never use vinegar, ammonia, or generic floor cleaners on wood — these can damage polyurethane finishes and penetrate into the wood grain. In NB's variable humidity conditions, excess moisture during cleaning can cause wood movement and finish clouding.

Laminate floors clean easily with a spray-and-wipe technique using laminate-specific cleaners. The melamine wear layer resists most construction debris, but avoid abrasive scrubbing that can dull the surface texture. Laminate's HDF core absorbs water, so use minimal moisture and dry immediately.

Luxury vinyl plank (LVP) and luxury vinyl tile (LVT) are the most forgiving for post-construction cleaning. These 100% waterproof surfaces handle standard floor cleaners and slightly more aggressive scrubbing if needed to remove stubborn adhesive residue or paint splatters. Use a plastic scraper for dried material — never metal tools that can gouge the wear layer.

Tile floors require grout line attention during post-construction cleaning. Construction dust embeds in grout texture and requires a soft brush with pH-neutral tile cleaner. Avoid acidic cleaners on natural stone tiles, as these can etch marble, travertine, and limestone surfaces permanently.

Carpet cleaning after construction requires professional hot water extraction to remove embedded dust from the pile and backing. Standard vacuuming only removes surface debris. Construction dust that remains in carpet becomes airborne every time someone walks across the surface, continuing to settle on other surfaces throughout your NB home.

Air quality management during cleaning is especially important in NB's tighter, more energy-efficient homes. Open windows for cross-ventilation while cleaning, and change your HVAC filter immediately after construction cleaning. Consider running an air purifier with HEPA filtration for 24-48 hours after cleaning to capture any remaining airborne particles.

Timing matters for post-construction cleaning. Schedule this work for late fall through early spring when NB's lower humidity levels help floors dry quickly and reduce the risk of moisture-related issues during the cleaning process.

Professional cleaning services experienced with post-construction cleanup use specialized equipment and products that protect your specific flooring type while achieving superior results. For valuable hardwood installations or extensive renovation projects, professional cleaning often pays for itself by preventing damage and ensuring warranty compliance.

Need help finding flooring professionals who can recommend trusted post-construction cleaning services? New Brunswick Flooring can connect you with experienced contractors through the New Brunswick Construction Network.

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Q3

What is the best way to repair a gouge or deep scratch in engineered hardwood flooring in my NB home?

Deep gouges in engineered hardwood can often be repaired successfully using wood filler, careful sanding, and matching stain — but the repair quality depends on the gouge depth and your floor's finish type.

The key factor is whether the gouge penetrates through the wear layer into the core material. Engineered hardwood has a thin veneer of real wood (typically 2-4mm thick) over a plywood or HDF core. If the scratch only affects the polyurethane finish and stays within the wood veneer, you can achieve an nearly invisible repair. If it goes through to the core, the repair will be more visible but still worthwhile.

Start by cleaning the damaged area with a damp cloth to remove any debris or loose wood fibers. For gouges that don't penetrate the wear layer, try a simple wood marker or touch-up pen first — these work surprisingly well on minor scratches and cost only \$5-10 at NB hardware stores. Choose a color slightly lighter than your floor since the repair will darken when you apply polyurethane over it.

For deeper gouges, use wood filler specifically designed for hardwood floors. Minwax Wood Filler or Bona Mix & Fill are good options available at most NB home centers. Clean out any loose material from the gouge, then press

the filler slightly proud of the surface using a putty knife. The filler will shrink as it dries, so overfill slightly. Allow 2-4 hours drying time in NB's variable humidity conditions — longer in summer when humidity is high.

Sand the dried filler flush with 120-grit sandpaper, then progress to 220-grit for smoothness. Sand with the wood grain direction, not against it. In NB's dry winter months, static buildup can attract dust to your repair area, so wipe frequently with a tack cloth. The sanded filler will appear lighter than your floor — this is normal.

Apply matching stain if needed to blend the repair with surrounding boards. Test stain colors on an inconspicuous area first, like inside a closet or under furniture. Many NB homes have red oak floors with golden or honey tones — Minwax Golden Oak or Early American are common matches. Apply stain sparingly with a small artist's brush, allow proper penetration time, then wipe excess.

Finish with polyurethane that matches your floor's sheen level (satin, semi-gloss, or gloss). Apply thin coats with a small brush, following the wood grain. Two light coats usually blend better than one heavy coat. The repair area may appear slightly different in certain lighting angles, but it should be much less noticeable than the original gouge.

NB's seasonal humidity changes affect repair materials differently than the surrounding floor. Schedule repairs during stable weather periods (late summer or early fall) when indoor humidity is most consistent. Avoid repairs during heating season startup or spring humidity swings when wood movement is most active.

When to hire a professional: If multiple boards are damaged, if the gouge extends across several planks, or if your floor has a specialty finish like hand-scraped or wire-brushed texture, professional repair or board replacement may be more cost-effective. A flooring professional can also assess whether spot repairs will blend acceptably with your specific floor's age and patina.

For extensive damage or if DIY repairs don't achieve acceptable results, New Brunswick Flooring can match you with local professionals experienced in engineered hardwood repair and refinishing.

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How do I maintain hardwood floors through NB's winter heating season?

The single most important thing you can do for your hardwood floors during NB's winter heating season is maintain indoor humidity between 35-45% relative humidity. Forced-air heating systems — the most common type in NB homes — strip moisture from indoor air, dropping humidity to 20-30% or even lower during the coldest months from November through March. At those levels, hardwood loses moisture, shrinks, and develops visible gaps between planks.

A whole-home humidifier connected to your furnace is the best long-term solution. Bypass or powered flow-through humidifiers cost \$300-\$800 installed in NB and maintain consistent humidity throughout the house. If a whole-home unit is not in the budget, portable console humidifiers (\$100-\$300) placed in the main living areas with hardwood floors are a reasonable alternative — just be consistent about running and refilling them. Place a digital hygrometer (\$15-\$30 at any NB hardware store) in a central location to monitor humidity levels throughout the heating season.

Some gapping during NB winters is normal and expected, especially with solid hardwood. Gaps of 1-2mm between planks in wide-plank floors (5 inches and wider) are typical when humidity drops below 35%. These gaps should close as humidity rises in spring. **If gaps exceed 2-3mm or do not close by June, your indoor humidity control may need improvement, or the wood may not have been properly acclimated before installation.** Engineered hardwood experiences significantly less seasonal gapping than solid hardwood because its cross-layered construction resists moisture-driven movement.

Winter cleaning and protection practices matter too. NB winters bring salt, sand, gravel, and snowmelt tracked in on boots — all of which are abrasive to hardwood finishes. Place heavy-duty mats at every entry door, both inside and outside. Use mats with a rubber backing to prevent moisture from soaking through to the hardwood underneath. Sweep or vacuum (using a hard-floor setting with no beater bar) daily in high-traffic areas during winter to remove grit before it scratches the finish.

When mopping hardwood in winter, use a barely damp microfibre mop with a hardwood-specific cleaner — never a soaking wet mop, steam mop, or vinegar solution. Excess water on hardwood during the already-dry winter months can cause localized swelling followed by cupping marks. Products like Bona Hardwood Floor Cleaner or similar pH-neutral, residue-free cleaners are ideal.

Avoid placing space heaters directly on or near hardwood floors. The concentrated dry heat can cause localized shrinkage, checking (small surface cracks), and finish damage. If you use space heaters during NB's cold snaps, keep them on a heat-resistant pad and maintain distance from the floor surface.

Seasonal maintenance schedule. Before heating season begins in October, check your humidifier is working and clean or replace the water panel. Apply a maintenance coat of hardwood floor polish if the finish looks dull from summer foot traffic. When spring arrives in April and humidity starts climbing, transition from humidifier to dehumidifier mode to keep levels below 55%, preventing the opposite problem of summer expansion and cupping.

With proper humidity control and consistent winter cleaning habits, your NB hardwood floors will handle the heating season beautifully for decades.

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Q5

What is the best way to clean luxury vinyl plank flooring in my NB home?

The best way to clean LVP flooring is simple: regular sweeping or vacuuming followed by damp mopping with a pH-neutral cleaner — no harsh chemicals, no excessive water, and no steam mops. LVP is one of the lowest-maintenance flooring options available, which is part of why it has become so popular across New Brunswick homes.

Daily and weekly cleaning keeps LVP looking its best with minimal effort. Sweep, dust mop, or vacuum (using the hard-floor setting with no beater bar or spinning brush) to remove dirt, sand, and grit. This is especially important during NB's winter months when tracked-in road salt, sand, and gravel act as abrasives that can dull the wear layer over time. Place quality doormats at every exterior entrance — both inside and outside — to catch the worst of the winter debris before it reaches your floors.

For damp mopping, use a microfibre mop that is wrung out until barely damp. LVP is waterproof, but standing water can seep into seams and edges, potentially reaching the subfloor beneath — particularly in older NB homes

where subfloor conditions may not be perfect. A spray mop that mists a small amount of cleaner ahead of the mop pad is ideal for LVP because it controls the amount of moisture precisely.

Choose the right cleaner. A pH-neutral, residue-free floor cleaner is what you want. Many LVP manufacturers recommend specific products — check your flooring's warranty documentation. General-purpose options like Bona Hard-Surface Floor Cleaner work well on most LVP. For a DIY solution, a few drops of dish soap in warm water works in a pinch, but rinse with clean water afterward to prevent a dull film from building up.

What to avoid on LVP. Never use a steam mop — the heat can soften the vinyl surface, damage the wear layer, and cause planks to warp or delaminate. Avoid abrasive cleaners, scouring pads, steel wool, or "mop and shine" products that leave a waxy buildup. Do not use ammonia-based cleaners, bleach, or highly alkaline products. These strip the factory finish and leave the surface looking hazy.

Dealing with NB-specific challenges. Winter salt residue is the biggest LVP cleaning challenge in NB homes. Salt crystals left on LVP can leave white marks and, if allowed to sit, may etch the surface. Wipe up salty slush and melted snow promptly with a damp cloth. For stubborn salt haze, a solution of one cup of white vinegar in a gallon of warm water applied with a damp mop dissolves the mineral residue without harming the vinyl.

In NB's humid summer months, you may notice more dust and allergens settling on LVP surfaces — the floor's smooth, non-porous surface does not trap particles the way carpet does, so regular sweeping or vacuuming keeps indoor air quality high and your floors looking clean.

Preventing scratches and dents. Use felt pads under all furniture legs and replace them every 6-12 months as they compress and collect grit. Use furniture coasters under heavy pieces like sofas and entertainment centres. When moving furniture or appliances across LVP, slide them on a thick blanket or plywood — never drag heavy items directly across the surface.

With this straightforward routine, your LVP floors will maintain their appearance for the full 15-25 year lifespan of the product.

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Q6

How do I protect my hardwood floors from winter salt and sand in New Brunswick?

The combination of road salt, sand, and snowmelt is the single biggest threat to hardwood floor finishes during NB's long winter season, and prevention starts at the door — literally. Salt is hygroscopic, meaning it attracts and holds moisture, which sits on your hardwood finish and slowly breaks it down. Sand and gravel are abrasive, grinding away the polyurethane with every footstep. NB's winters run from November through April with heavy municipal salting, so this is a five-month-long battle that demands a layered defence.

Your first line of defence is a serious entry mat system. A single decorative mat is not enough for NB winters. Use a coarse, outdoor-rated scraper mat outside the door to knock off the worst snow, ice, and gravel, then a large, absorbent indoor mat (at least 3-4 feet long) to capture salt and moisture from boot soles. Commercial-grade entry mats with rubber backing work best because they trap debris effectively and prevent meltwater from soaking through to the hardwood underneath. Place mats at every exterior door — front, back, garage entry, and mudroom. Invest \$30-\$80 per entry in quality mats and replace them when they become matted and stop trapping grit effectively.

Establish a footwear policy. The easiest way to protect hardwood floors from salt and sand is to remove boots at the door. A boot tray (\$15-\$30) with raised edges catches meltwater and keeps it contained. In NB, where most homes have a designated porch, mudroom, or enclosed entry, setting up a proper boot removal area is both practical and culturally normal. Provide indoor slippers or house shoes during winter months.

Clean more frequently during winter. Sweep or vacuum high-traffic areas daily, especially entryways, hallways, and kitchen floors. Use a vacuum with a hard-floor setting — no beater bar or spinning brush that can scatter grit and scratch the finish. Salt residue that is not removed promptly attracts moisture from the air (especially during humid spells between cold snaps) and creates a corrosive film on the finish. A dry microfibre dust mop is excellent for quick daily passes.

Wipe up salt and slush immediately when it happens. When someone tracks in a wet, salty mess, clean it up right away. Damp-mop the affected area with a barely damp microfibre mop and a hardwood-specific cleaner. For stubborn white salt stains, a very dilute vinegar-and-water solution (one cup vinegar per gallon of warm water) dissolves mineral residue without damaging the finish — but rinse with clean water and dry promptly.

Seasonal finish maintenance helps. Before winter arrives in October or November, apply a maintenance coat of polyurethane-compatible floor polish or refresher to high-traffic areas. This adds a sacrificial layer of protection that absorbs the worst of winter's abuse instead of your permanent finish. Products like Bona Refresher or Basic Coatings Squeaky Cleaner provide this buffer layer. In spring, assess the finish condition — if you see dull, whitened, or worn areas from winter traffic, a professional screen-and-recoat (\$2-\$4 per square foot) restores the protective layer before summer humidity arrives.

Consider area rugs in high-traffic winter zones. A runner in the front hallway and area rugs in the living room protect the hardwood underneath from the heaviest winter foot traffic. Use rugs with breathable, non-rubber backing to allow the hardwood to breathe — solid rubber-backed rugs can trap moisture against the finish.

With consistent prevention and prompt cleanup, your NB hardwood floors will come through each winter season looking great.

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How often should hardwood floors be refinished in a New Brunswick home?

Most hardwood floors in New Brunswick homes need full refinishing every 7-12 years, though the actual timeline depends heavily on traffic levels, the wood species, the finish type, and how well you manage indoor humidity through NB's dramatic seasonal swings.

The finish on your hardwood floor — whether oil-based polyurethane, water-based polyurethane, or a penetrating oil — is what takes the daily punishment. Once that protective layer wears through to bare wood, moisture penetrates the grain and causes permanent staining, greying, and damage that simple cleaning cannot reverse. High-traffic areas like hallways, kitchen paths, and living room walkways wear fastest and often show signs of finish failure years before bedrooms or dining rooms.

Oil-based polyurethane finishes, which are common in older NB homes, typically last 7-10 years before needing a full sand-and-refinish. They amber over time and develop a warm patina that many homeowners love. **Water-based polyurethane** is clearer and harder, often lasting 10-15 years in moderate-traffic areas. **Penetrating oil finishes** (like Rubio Monocoat or Osmo) require more frequent maintenance — a refresher coat every 2-3 years — but they can be spot-repaired without sanding the entire floor, which is a significant advantage.

New Brunswick's Maritime climate puts extra stress on hardwood finishes. The 30-50% relative humidity swing between winter and summer causes wood to expand and contract repeatedly, which flexes the finish layer and accelerates micro-cracking. Homes in northern NB — Bathurst, Edmundston, Campbellton — experience longer heating seasons with more extreme indoor drying, which can shorten finish lifespan by 1-2 years compared to southern NB homes. If you are not running a humidifier during winter to keep indoor RH between 35-45%, your finish is working harder and will fail sooner.

Signs your hardwood needs refinishing include visible wear paths where the finish looks dull or matte compared to surrounding areas, water droplets that soak into the wood instead of beading on the surface, greying or discolouration in high-traffic zones, and scratches that have penetrated through the finish into the wood grain.

Before committing to a full refinish, consider a **screen and recoat** — a lighter process where the existing finish is lightly abraded and a fresh coat of polyurethane is applied on top. This costs \$2-\$3 per square foot in NB compared to \$3-\$6 per square foot for a full sand-and-refinish, and it can extend the life of your finish by 3-5 years. A screen and recoat works well when the finish is worn but the wood itself is not damaged or stained. For a typical 1,000-square-foot main floor, expect to pay \$3,000-\$6,000 for a full refinish in New Brunswick.

The best time to refinish hardwood in NB is September through November, when humidity is moderate, windows can be opened for ventilation, and the finish cures in stable conditions. Avoid winter refinishing if possible

— low humidity can cause freshly sanded wood to absorb finish unevenly, and the long cure time in cold, dry air can affect the result.

Hardwood refinishing is a project best left to professionals. Drum sanders are powerful and unforgiving — a moment's hesitation creates gouges and swirl marks that cannot be corrected without re-sanding. A professional refinisher in NB will assess the wood thickness remaining, identify any moisture-related damage, and recommend the right finish system for your home's conditions.

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Q8

Can scratched hardwood floors be repaired without full sanding in NB?

Yes, many scratches on hardwood floors can be repaired without a full sand-and-refinish, but the repair method depends entirely on the depth of the damage — whether the scratch is in the finish layer only, into the stain, or deep into the wood grain itself.

Surface scratches that affect only the polyurethane or finish layer are the easiest to address. These appear as fine white or light lines that are visible in certain lighting but do not catch your fingernail when you run it across them. For these, a hardwood floor polish or refresher product (such as Bona Hardwood Floor Polish or Rejuvenate) fills the micro-scratches and restores the sheen. This is a straightforward DIY project — clean the floor thoroughly, apply the product with a flat mop, and let it dry. The results are temporary (3-6 months) but effective for maintaining appearance between professional refinishing cycles.

For scratches that have penetrated through the finish into the stain layer — showing as lines of lighter or darker wood — **touch-up markers and stain pens** are the go-to repair. Minwax, Varathane, and Old Masters all make

colour-matched wood stain markers that you apply directly into the scratch, wipe away the excess, and seal with a thin coat of matching polyurethane. Getting the colour match right takes patience and testing on an inconspicuous area first.

Deeper scratches and gouges that penetrate into the wood grain require wood filler. Choose a colour-matched wood filler (not generic wood putty, which does not take stain), press it into the gouge with a putty knife, let it dry, sand flush with 220-grit sandpaper, and apply matching stain and polyurethane. This works well for isolated damage but is noticeable on close inspection in most cases.

For homes in New Brunswick where scratches are widespread across a room — common in entryways and kitchens after a harsh winter of tracked-in grit and road salt — a **screen and recoat** is the most effective repair short of full refinishing. A floor professional lightly abrades the entire finish surface with a floor buffer and screening pad, then applies a fresh coat of polyurethane. This hides minor surface scratches, evens out the sheen, and adds a new protective layer. In NB, expect to pay \$2-\$3 per square foot for this service — significantly less than the \$3-\$6 per square foot for a full sand-and-refinish.

New Brunswick's Maritime climate adds a complication: winter drying shrinks hardwood planks, opening gaps where grit and debris settle between boards. When the wood expands again in summer, that trapped debris acts like sandpaper on the finish. **Preventing scratches is far more effective than repairing them.** Keep indoor humidity between 35-55% year-round, use felt pads under all furniture legs (check and replace them every 6 months), place quality doormats at every exterior entrance to catch salt and grit, and avoid walking on hardwood in outdoor boots during winter.

For isolated scratches, DIY repair is perfectly reasonable and costs under \$30 in materials. For widespread finish wear or deep scratches across large areas, hire a professional flooring contractor — a screen and recoat is a cost-effective middle ground that restores the floor's appearance without the dust, disruption, and expense of a full refinish.

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What humidity level should I maintain in my NB home to protect hardwood floors?

Maintain indoor relative humidity between 35% and 55% year-round to protect hardwood floors in New Brunswick — and this is genuinely the single most important maintenance task for any NB homeowner with wood flooring. New Brunswick's Maritime climate creates humidity swings more extreme than almost any other province, and hardwood floors are the first casualty when humidity goes unchecked.

During **winter** (October through April), forced-air heating systems in NB homes can drop indoor humidity to 20-30% RH — far below the safe range. At these levels, hardwood shrinks across its width, opening visible gaps between planks. Solid red oak, the most common hardwood species in NB, can shrink by 1-2mm per plank at 20% RH. Over a 12-foot-wide room, this adds up to clearly visible gaps that collect dust and debris. In northern NB communities like Bathurst, Edmundston, and Campbellton, longer heating seasons make this problem even more persistent.

During **summer** (June through September), Maritime humidity regularly pushes indoor levels above 65% without air conditioning or dehumidification. At these levels, hardwood absorbs excess moisture and expands, causing **cupping** — where plank edges rise higher than the centres. Prolonged high humidity can also trigger mould growth beneath the flooring, particularly in older NB homes with limited air circulation.

A whole-home humidifier connected to your furnace is the most effective winter solution. Bypass or flow-through models cost \$200-\$500 installed in NB and add moisture to the heated air as it circulates. If a whole-home unit is not practical, portable console humidifiers in the main living areas help, but you will need to monitor and refill them regularly. For summer, a **dehumidifier** or central air conditioning keeps humidity in the safe zone. A quality dehumidifier costs \$300-\$600 and is essential for most NB homes, particularly those without AC.

Invest in a **digital hygrometer** — they cost \$15-\$30 and give you real-time humidity readings. Place one on the main floor near your hardwood and check it regularly. Some smart thermostats (like Ecobee) include humidity monitoring and can even control humidifiers and dehumidifiers automatically.

Engineered hardwood tolerates NB's humidity swings significantly better than solid hardwood. Its cross-ply construction resists expansion and contraction, making it more stable through the 30-50% annual RH swing that NB homes commonly experience. If you are installing new hardwood in an NB home without robust humidity control systems, engineered hardwood is the safer investment.

The target range of 35-55% RH is not arbitrary — it comes directly from the National Wood Flooring Association and is echoed by every major hardwood manufacturer's warranty requirements. Many hardwood warranties are voided if the homeowner cannot demonstrate that indoor humidity was maintained within the specified range. In

New Brunswick, meeting this standard requires active humidity management in both winter and summer — it will not happen passively in our climate.

If you are noticing seasonal gaps, cupping, or finish cracking on your existing hardwood, humidity is almost certainly the cause. A professional flooring assessment can determine whether the damage is cosmetic and reversible or whether refinishing or repairs are needed.

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How do I remove water stains from hardwood floors in my NB home?

The approach to removing water stains from hardwood depends on whether the stain is white (surface level, trapped in the finish) or dark (penetrated into the wood grain) — and each requires a different repair method.

White water stains are the most common and the easiest to fix. These cloudy, whitish marks are caused by moisture trapped between layers of finish or on the finish surface. They often appear after a wet glass, plant pot, or spilled water sits on the floor without being wiped up promptly. For light white stains, try these approaches in order: First, apply a small amount of **mineral spirits** or denatured alcohol on a soft cloth and rub the stain gently in the direction of the wood grain. This often dissolves the trapped moisture and clears the cloudiness. If that does not work, mix a paste of **baking soda and water** (or baking soda and a few drops of white vinegar), apply it to the stain, and rub gently with a soft cloth. Let it sit for a few minutes, then wipe clean. For stubborn white stains, a light rub with **0000-grade steel wool** and a small amount of paste wax or mineral oil often removes the cloudiness without damaging the surrounding finish. Work gently and always move with the grain.

Dark water stains are a more serious problem. These black or very dark grey marks indicate that water has penetrated through the finish and into the wood itself, reacting with the tannins in the wood grain. Dark stains are common in NB homes after winter boot drips near entryways, forgotten leaks under radiators, or spring moisture intrusion. Fixing dark stains requires stripping the finish in the affected area, **applying oxalic acid (wood bleach)** to the stain, neutralizing with borax solution, allowing the wood to dry completely, and then re-staining and refinishing to match the surrounding floor. This is a multi-step process that requires careful colour matching and finish blending. For isolated spots, it is a feasible DIY project if you are patient and comfortable with the process. For larger areas or prominent locations, a professional refinisher will achieve a much more seamless result.

New Brunswick's climate makes water stain prevention especially important. **Spring snowmelt** (April through June) is the highest-risk season — tracked-in slush from boots melts on the floor and sits in puddles if not wiped immediately. Winter road salt dissolved in snowmelt is particularly damaging because it leaves mineral deposits that etch the finish even after the water evaporates. During spring, keep absorbent mats at all entrances and wipe up standing water immediately.

Prevention tips for NB homes: Use boot trays at all exterior doors during winter and spring. Place felt-backed mats or protective saucers under all plant pots. Wipe up spills within minutes — not hours. Keep a dry mop or absorbent cloth near the kitchen and entryway during high-moisture seasons. If your NB home has a history of basement moisture or high humidity, run a dehumidifier to keep indoor humidity below 55%, which helps the finish maintain its water-resistant properties.

For white stains, DIY repair is straightforward and costs under \$20 in materials. For dark stains that have penetrated the wood, the repair involves wood bleach, stain matching, and finish blending — if the stain is in a prominent location, a professional flooring refinisher will deliver a far more invisible repair. In NB, expect to pay \$100-\$300 for a professional spot repair depending on the size and location.

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Q11

What cleaning products should I avoid on hardwood floors in NB?

Avoid vinegar, ammonia, steam mops, oil soap, and all-purpose household cleaners on hardwood floors — these are the most common products that NB homeowners use thinking they are helping, when they are actually degrading the finish and damaging the wood over time.

Vinegar and water is perhaps the most widely recommended "natural" hardwood cleaner, and it is one of the worst. Vinegar is acetic acid — diluted, but still acidic enough to etch polyurethane finishes with repeated use. Over months of vinegar-and-water mopping, the finish becomes dull, hazy, and prematurely worn. This is especially damaging in NB homes where the finish is already under stress from seasonal humidity swings causing micro-flexing and cracking.

Ammonia-based cleaners (including many glass cleaners like Windex) are even more aggressive. Ammonia strips the finish, discolours the wood, and leaves a sticky residue that attracts dirt. Never use any product containing ammonia on hardwood.

Murphy's Oil Soap and similar oil-based wood cleaners are problematic for a different reason. They leave an oily residue that builds up on the finish surface over time, creating a dull, smeared appearance. This residue also

interferes with future refinishing — a professional refinisher will need to strip the oil buildup before applying new finish, which adds time and cost. If your floors have been cleaned with oil soap for years, a professional screening may be needed to remove the accumulated residue.

All-purpose household cleaners (Mr. Clean, Pine-Sol, Lysol floor cleaners) are formulated for tile, vinyl, and linoleum — not hardwood. They contain surfactants and chemicals that can dull polyurethane, leave residue, and strip wax finishes. The "for all floors" label on these products is misleading.

Steam mops force hot moisture into the seams and finish of hardwood floors. In New Brunswick, where seasonal humidity changes already stress wood dimensionally, adding concentrated steam to the equation accelerates finish failure, can cause localized swelling at plank edges, and pushes moisture into joints where it promotes rot in older NB homes with softwood subfloors.

What to Use Instead

The best cleaning routine for hardwood floors in NB is simple: **dry dust mop daily** (or every few days) to pick up grit and debris — this is especially critical during NB winters when tracked-in road salt and sand act as abrasives under foot traffic. For wet cleaning, use a **manufacturer-recommended hardwood floor cleaner** like Bona Hardwood Floor Cleaner, Harwood Floor Cleaner by Basic Coatings, or the product recommended by your specific floor's manufacturer. Apply sparingly with a **damp (not wet) microfibre mop** — the mop should feel barely moist to the touch. Never pour cleaning solution directly on the floor, and never leave standing water.

During NB's spring season when tracked-in mud and salt residue are heaviest, increase your dry mopping frequency to daily. A quick pass with a microfibre dust mop takes 5 minutes and prevents grit from grinding into the finish under foot traffic.

Keeping your cleaning routine simple and avoiding harsh chemicals will extend the life of your hardwood finish by years — saving you the \$3,000-\$6,000 cost of a full refinish on a typical NB main floor.

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Q12

How do I fix a cupped hardwood floor in my New Brunswick home?

Cupped hardwood floors — where plank edges are higher than the centres, creating a washboard appearance — are almost always caused by excess moisture from below the floor, and the fix must address the moisture source before addressing the wood itself. In New Brunswick's Maritime climate, cupping is one of the most common hardwood floor problems, particularly during summer humidity spikes and in homes with inadequate moisture management.

Before doing anything to the wood, **identify and eliminate the moisture source.** The most common causes of cupping in NB homes include: summer humidity pushing indoor levels above 60-65% without AC or dehumidification; plumbing leaks beneath the floor (check for dripping pipes, slow supply line leaks, or condensation on cold water pipes); crawl space or basement moisture migrating upward through the subfloor; and inadequate exterior drainage directing rainwater or snowmelt toward the foundation. In coastal NB communities — Saint John, Shediac, and along the Bay of Fundy — persistently higher ambient humidity makes cupping more common and more severe.

Once you have identified the moisture source, **give the floor time to recover before sanding.** This is critical and the most common mistake NB homeowners make — they see cupped floors in July, panic, and have them sanded flat. But if the wood has not fully dried and returned to equilibrium, sanding removes extra material from the raised edges. When the wood eventually dries and flattens in winter, those over-sanded edges are now lower than the centres, creating **crowning** — the opposite problem, which is permanent and requires a full refinish to correct.

The proper sequence is: First, reduce and stabilize indoor humidity to 35-50% using a dehumidifier, air conditioning, or both. In NB, this typically means running a dehumidifier from June through September. Second, monitor the floor with a moisture metre over several weeks or months. Third, once moisture readings in the wood stabilize and match the expected equilibrium moisture content for your home (typically 7-9% in NB with proper humidity control), assess whether the cupping has resolved on its own. Mild cupping often flattens completely once the moisture imbalance is corrected.

If cupping persists after the floor has reached moisture equilibrium — which can take 1-3 months or even a full seasonal cycle in NB — then professional sanding and refinishing is appropriate. A professional will verify moisture readings before sanding to ensure the wood is stable. In New Brunswick, hardwood refinishing costs \$3-\$6 per square foot, with a typical 1,000-square-foot main floor running \$3,000-\$6,000.

For severe cupping where planks have lifted significantly or subfloor damage is involved, individual planks may need to be removed and replaced. In older NB homes (pre-1970s), the subfloor beneath the hardwood may be original board sheathing that has also absorbed moisture and warped, requiring repair before the hardwood can be addressed.

Cupping repairs should always involve a professional flooring contractor. The diagnostic process — identifying the moisture source, measuring wood moisture content, determining whether the cupping is active or has stabilized — requires experience and proper equipment. Sanding a cupped floor at the wrong time is an expensive mistake that creates a worse problem than the original cupping.

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Can I use a steam mop on my hardwood or LVP floors in NB?

No — do not use a steam mop on hardwood floors, and use caution even on LVP. Despite their popularity and marketing claims, steam mops are one of the most damaging cleaning tools for hardwood flooring, and their risks are amplified in New Brunswick's moisture-sensitive climate.

On **hardwood floors**, steam mops force hot moisture directly into the finish, seams, and joints between planks. The combination of heat and water degrades polyurethane finishes, causes localized swelling at plank edges, and pushes moisture into the wood grain where it promotes warping, cupping, and eventual rot. Every major hardwood flooring manufacturer — including Bruce, Mirage, Lauzon, and Mercier — explicitly voids warranty coverage for damage caused by steam mopping. In New Brunswick, where hardwood already endures a 30-50% annual humidity swing between winter drying and summer expansion, adding concentrated steam to the equation accelerates finish failure and dimensional damage that the wood is already fighting to resist.

The damage from steam mopping is cumulative and often invisible at first. Homeowners use a steam mop for months or years, noticing only that their finish seems to be wearing faster than expected. By the time visible damage appears — dull patches, white cloudiness in the finish, edge swelling, or darkening at seams — the finish integrity has been compromised across the entire floor. Refinishing is the only remedy at that point, costing \$3-\$6 per square foot in NB.

On **luxury vinyl plank (LVP)**, the situation is more nuanced. LVP is 100% waterproof as a material, so the steam will not damage the vinyl surface itself. However, steam can force moisture through the click-lock seams between planks and underneath the flooring. In a floating LVP installation over concrete — common in NB basements — this trapped moisture can promote mould growth on the underlayment or subfloor beneath. Some LVP manufacturers permit light steam mopping; others void the warranty for it. **Check your specific product's care guide before using a steam mop on LVP.** If in doubt, skip the steam.

On **tile and porcelain floors**, steam mops are generally safe and effective. The heat helps sanitize grout lines and dissolve soap scum. This is the one flooring type where steam mopping makes genuine sense.

What to Use Instead

For hardwood, the ideal cleaning method is a **microfibre dust mop** for daily dry cleaning (critical during NB winters when salt and grit are tracked in daily) and a **damp microfibre mop** with a pH-neutral hardwood floor cleaner like Bona for periodic wet cleaning. "Damp" means wrung out until barely moist — you should not see water on the floor behind the mop. This method is safer, gentler, and keeps the finish intact far longer than any steam or chemical approach.

For LVP, the same damp-mop method works perfectly. LVP surfaces are non-porous and clean easily without steam — a damp mop with warm water and a mild cleaner removes virtually all household dirt and grime.

Protecting your floors from NB's winter debris is more important than any cleaning method. A good doormat system at every entrance catches salt, sand, and moisture before it reaches your floors — preventing damage is always cheaper than repairing it.

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Q14

How do I prevent pet scratches on hardwood floors in my NB home?

Keeping pet nails trimmed every 2-3 weeks is the single most effective way to prevent scratches on hardwood floors, but a combination of nail care, floor protection, and choosing the right finish can dramatically reduce pet-related wear in your NB home.

Nail maintenance is where prevention starts. Dogs' nails should be trimmed or ground (with a Dremel-style grinder) frequently enough that they do not click on the floor when the dog walks. Clicking nails are scratching nails. Cats are less damaging to hardwood because they retract their claws when walking, though they can cause damage if they sprint, play aggressively, or sharpen claws on floor edges. Regular grooming is the most cost-effective floor protection you can invest in.

Floor finish selection makes a significant difference in scratch resistance. If you are refinishing or installing new hardwood, consider these options: **Aluminum oxide-infused finishes** are the hardest and most scratch-resistant — many factory-finished engineered hardwood products come with these finishes standard, and they resist pet scratches far better than site-applied polyurethane. **Water-based polyurethane** is harder and more scratch-

resistant than oil-based polyurethane, though it lacks the warm amber tone that oil-based finishes develop over time. **Matte or satin sheens** show scratches far less than high-gloss finishes — on a semi-gloss or gloss hardwood floor, every scratch is visible in angled light, while satin finishes hide minor surface wear effectively.

Wood species choice also matters. Harder species resist scratches better — **white oak** (Janka hardness 1,360) and **hard maple** (Janka 1,450) hold up significantly better than softer species like **red oak** (1,290), **birch** (1,260), or especially **pine** (690), which is common in older NB homes. If you are choosing new hardwood and have pets, prioritize harder species and engineered products with factory-applied aluminum oxide finishes.

For **existing hardwood floors** in your NB home, several practical measures reduce pet scratch damage. Place area rugs and runners in high-traffic pet paths — the route from the back door to the living room, around food and water bowls, and favourite lounging spots. Use rugs with non-slip pads underneath (not rubber-backed rugs, which can discolour hardwood). Apply **felt pads to furniture legs** and check them every 6 months — pets jumping on and off furniture shift the pieces, and exposed metal or plastic legs gouge hardwood quickly.

New Brunswick's winter climate adds an extra concern: **ice, road salt, and grit** cling to pet paws and are tracked directly onto hardwood. These abrasives grind into the finish under foot and paw traffic. Keep a towel near the door and wipe your pet's paws after every outdoor trip during winter — this 30-second habit prevents more floor damage than any finish or product.

Traction products like toe grips, nail caps (Soft Paws), or paw wax help dogs maintain grip on hardwood without scratching. These are especially useful for older dogs or large breeds that slip on smooth hardwood surfaces.

If your hardwood floors already show significant pet scratch damage, a **screen and recoat** (\$2-\$3 per square foot in NB) can restore the finish and hide surface-level scratches without the full cost and disruption of a complete refinish. For deeper gouges, individual spot repairs with matching stain and finish are effective. A professional flooring refinisher can assess the damage and recommend the most cost-effective repair approach.

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What is the best doormat system to protect NB home floors from winter debris?

A proper doormat system for a New Brunswick home uses a three-layer approach: a coarse outdoor scraper mat, a heavy-duty indoor entry mat, and a boot tray — and this simple setup prevents more floor damage than any cleaning product or finish treatment you can buy. NB's winters bring a relentless combination of road salt, sand, gravel, snowmelt, and mud that will destroy any flooring finish if tracked through the house unchecked.

Layer one — the outdoor scraper mat — goes on the step or landing outside your exterior door. Choose a **coarse coir (coconut fibre) mat** or a **rubber scraper mat** with raised treads or bristles. This catches the heaviest debris: chunks of ice, gravel, packed snow, and large salt crystals. Look for a mat at least 24 by 36 inches — larger if your entrance allows. Coir mats are inexpensive (\$15-\$30) and effective but break down after 2-3 NB winters and need replacing. Rubber scraper mats are more durable and easier to clean but cost \$25-\$50.

Layer two — the indoor entry mat — goes just inside the door and is the workhorse of your system. This should be a **commercial-grade, absorbent nylon or polypropylene mat** with a rubber backing, at least 3 by 5 feet in size. The larger this mat, the more steps a person takes on it before reaching your actual floor, and each step removes more moisture and fine debris. Entry mats in this category cost \$40-\$80 for quality products. Avoid thin decorative mats or cotton kitchen rugs — they saturate quickly, slip on hard floors, and provide minimal protection. Commercial-quality entry mats absorb moisture, trap fine sand and salt, and stay flat. **Wash or vacuum this mat weekly during NB's winter months** — a saturated, dirty mat stops working and starts redistributing debris instead of trapping it.

Layer three — the boot tray — sits on or beside the indoor mat and catches snowmelt as boots and shoes dry. A **heavy-duty rubber boot tray** (\$15-\$25) with raised edges contains the slush and salt-laden meltwater that would otherwise pool on your floor. In NB, this is not optional — it is essential. The salt dissolved in snowmelt is corrosive to hardwood finishes, etches laminate surfaces, and leaves mineral deposits on tile and LVP. A boot tray captures all of this before it reaches your floor.

For high-traffic NB homes, consider adding a **runner rug** extending from the entryway into the main hall. A washable runner with a non-slip backing protects the first 6-10 feet of hallway flooring, which is where the majority of winter debris damage occurs. Runners in this size range cost \$30-\$60 at NB retailers.

Maintenance during NB winter is critical. Shake or vacuum outdoor mats weekly. Wash indoor entry mats every 1-2 weeks during the December-through-March peak. Empty and rinse boot trays whenever meltwater accumulates. Replace worn mats promptly — a frayed, thinned mat provides a false sense of security while debris passes right through.

This three-layer system costs \$75-\$150 to set up and saves thousands in floor maintenance and refinishing over the years. For a home with hardwood floors where refinishing costs \$3,000-\$6,000, a proper doormat system at every exterior entrance is the best investment in floor longevity you can make.

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How do I care for tile grout on my NB kitchen floor to prevent staining?

Seal your grout within 2-3 weeks of installation and reseal every 1-2 years — this is the most important step for keeping NB kitchen floor grout clean and stain-free. Unsanded and sanded cement grout is porous by nature, and without a penetrating sealer, it absorbs spills, cooking oils, and tracked-in moisture like a sponge, leading to permanent discolouration that no amount of scrubbing can reverse.

Grout sealing is straightforward and a good DIY project. Use a **penetrating (impregnating) grout sealer** — not a topical sealer, which sits on the surface and wears off quickly in a kitchen. Quality penetrating sealers from brands like Aqua Mix, Miracle Sealants, or TileLab soak into the grout pores and repel moisture and stains from within. Apply with a small foam brush, applicator bottle, or roller along each grout line, let it penetrate for the time specified on the product (typically 5-15 minutes), and wipe away the excess from the tile surface. A bottle of sealer costs \$15-\$30 and covers 200-400 square feet of grout lines. In New Brunswick kitchens, reseal annually if you cook frequently with oils and sauces, or every 2 years for lighter-use kitchens.

To test whether your grout needs resealing, **drop a few drops of water on a grout line.** If the water beads on the surface, the sealer is still working. If it soaks in and darkens the grout within 1-2 minutes, it is time to reseal.

Daily and weekly cleaning is the second pillar of grout care. For routine cleaning, sweep or vacuum the floor to remove grit (especially important during NB winters when tracked-in road salt and sand settle into grout lines and act as abrasives). Mop with warm water and a **pH-neutral tile and grout cleaner** — avoid acidic cleaners (vinegar, lemon juice, citrus-based products) and bleach-based cleaners for regular use, as they break down grout sealers and can deteriorate the cement binder in the grout itself over time. A pH-neutral cleaner like Aqua Mix Concentrated Stone & Tile Cleaner or a dedicated grout-safe floor cleaner is the right choice for regular mopping.

For existing stains, a paste of **baking soda and water** applied to the stained grout, left for 10-15 minutes, and scrubbed with a stiff nylon brush (not metal, which damages grout) is effective for most organic stains — coffee, wine, food splashes. For tougher stains, **oxygen bleach** (OxiClean dissolved in warm water) applied and left for 15-30 minutes loosens embedded dirt without damaging the grout. Chlorine bleach works for severe staining but should be used sparingly — it degrades grout sealers and can discolour coloured grout.

New Brunswick's climate adds a specific challenge to kitchen floor grout care. **Winter boot traffic** tracks road salt into the kitchen, and salt residue settles into grout lines where it draws moisture and leaves white mineral deposits. During winter months, increase your mopping frequency and use warm water to dissolve salt residue before it accumulates. The spring transition is another high-risk period — mud and snowmelt tracked indoors carry fine clay particles that embed in unsealed grout and cause a persistent brownish-grey discolouration.

Epoxy grout, if you are installing new tile or regrouting, is an alternative that eliminates most maintenance concerns. Epoxy grout is non-porous, stain-proof, and does not require sealing. It costs more than cement grout (\$5-\$8 per linear foot installed versus \$2-\$4 for cement grout) and is harder to apply, but it is virtually maintenance-free in a kitchen environment. Ask your tile installer about epoxy grout if low-maintenance grout care is a priority.

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Q17

How long do different types of flooring last in a New Brunswick home?

Flooring lifespan in a New Brunswick home varies dramatically by material — from 10 years for budget laminate to 100+ years for well-maintained solid hardwood — but NB's Maritime humidity cycles are the single biggest factor that separates how long flooring *should* last from how long it *actually* lasts here.

Solid hardwood is the longevity champion at 50-100+ years, but only if you control indoor humidity year-round. NB homes that maintain 35-55% relative humidity through winter humidification and summer dehumidification can expect their oak, maple, or birch floors to outlast the house itself, with professional refinishing every 10-15 years adding decades of life. Without humidity management, expect accelerated gapping, cupping, and finish breakdown that shortens practical lifespan to 25-40 years. **Engineered hardwood** lasts 25-50 years and handles NB's humidity swings significantly better than solid, though it can only be refinished 1-3 times depending on the wear layer thickness (look for at least a 3mm wear layer if you want multiple refinishing cycles).

Luxury vinyl plank (LVP) with an SPC or WPC core is the rising star in NB and typically lasts 15-25 years, with premium brands like COREtec and Mannington pushing toward the upper end. LVP is completely unaffected by NB's moisture fluctuations, which gives it a practical advantage — it maintains its appearance and structural integrity without any humidity management. **Laminate flooring** lasts 10-20 years depending on quality. An AC4 or

AC5-rated laminate in a low-moisture area can reach the upper range, but standard HDF-core laminate in a humid NB kitchen or basement may fail in under 10 years if moisture penetrates the core.

Porcelain tile is essentially permanent at 50-75+ years when properly installed on a well-prepared substrate. The tile itself will not degrade in NB conditions, but grout requires periodic resealing (every 1-3 years) and the substrate preparation is critical — cracked tiles at the 5-10 year mark almost always indicate a substrate failure, not a tile failure. **Carpet** has the shortest lifespan at 8-15 years for residential nylon broadloom, with high-traffic areas showing wear sooner. NB basement carpet faces additional challenges from moisture migration through concrete, which can cause mould and odour issues that end the carpet's useful life well before physical wear would.

NB-Specific Factors That Shorten Flooring Life

The biggest threat to flooring longevity in New Brunswick is unmanaged humidity. A solid hardwood floor installed at \$10-\$14/sq ft that develops severe seasonal gapping because the homeowner does not run a humidifier in winter is effectively compromised within the first few years. Similarly, any flooring installed in an NB basement without proper moisture testing and vapour barriers faces a dramatically shortened lifespan.

Older NB homes (pre-1970s) present additional challenges. Original board subfloors may have uneven spots that telegraph through thin flooring materials, and crawl spaces without vapour barriers introduce continuous ground moisture into the floor assembly. Addressing these subfloor conditions before installation adds \$1-\$5/sq ft but can double the effective lifespan of the new flooring.

The most cost-effective approach in New Brunswick is matching the flooring material to the room's moisture conditions. Put hardwood on main floors with humidity control, LVP or tile in basements and bathrooms, and quality carpet in bedrooms. This strategy maximizes each material's lifespan by placing it where NB's conditions work with it rather than against it.

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What is the best floor polish or protector for hardwood in NB conditions?

The best hardwood floor protector for New Brunswick homes is a high-quality water-based polyurethane refresher coat — not a wax or polish — because NB's extreme seasonal humidity swings demand a finish that breathes with the wood rather than sitting on top as a brittle layer. Products like Bona Traffic HD, StreetShoe, or Loba 2K Supra AT are professional-grade water-based finishes that handle NB's 30-50% annual humidity range exceptionally well.

The distinction between polish, protector, and refinishing matters enormously. **Polishes** (Bona Hardwood Floor Polish, Rejuvenate) leave a thin acrylic layer that adds temporary shine and minor scratch resistance. They are fine for cosmetic maintenance every 2-4 months but offer no real protection against NB's humidity-driven wood movement. **Protectors and refresher coats** (Bona Mega, Pallmann Pall-X 98) are actual polyurethane layers that bond to the existing finish and restore the protective barrier — these are what NB hardwood floors need every 3-5 years. **Full refinishing** (sanding to bare wood and applying 3 coats of polyurethane) is the nuclear option every 10-15 years and costs \$3-\$6/sq ft in the New Brunswick market.

For regular maintenance between recoats, use a **pH-neutral hardwood floor cleaner** (Bona Hardwood Floor Cleaner is the industry standard) with a microfibre mop. Never use vinegar, Murphy's Oil Soap, or steam mops on polyurethane-finished hardwood — these either dull the finish or force moisture into the wood, which is particularly damaging in NB where the wood is already stressed by seasonal humidity changes. Clean up spills immediately and keep a doormat at every exterior door to catch salt, sand, and snowmelt during NB's long winter.

Humidity Management Is the Best Protector

Here is the honest truth that no product manufacturer will tell you: **the single best thing you can do for your hardwood floors in New Brunswick is maintain indoor humidity between 35-55% year-round.** From October through April, forced-air heating drops NB homes to 20-30% RH, causing wood to shrink and finishes to crack. Run a whole-home humidifier set to 35-45% during heating season. In summer, use a dehumidifier or air conditioning to keep levels below 55-60%. This consistent environment prevents the expansion-contraction cycles that crack finishes and create gaps where moisture penetrates.

For practical daily protection, felt pads under all furniture legs are essential — hardwood in NB homes that expand and contract seasonally are more vulnerable to furniture scratches as the wood shifts. Replace pads annually as they collect grit. Area rugs in high-traffic zones protect the finish without trapping moisture if you use rugs with breathable backings (avoid rubber-backed rugs, which trap moisture against the wood).

If your hardwood floors are looking dull but the finish is still intact (water beads on the surface rather than soaking in), a professional screen-and-recoat at \$1.50-\$3/sq ft is far more cost-effective than a full refinish. This lightly abrades the existing finish and applies a fresh polyurethane coat, restoring protection and shine. For a typical 800 sq ft NB main floor, expect to pay \$1,200-\$2,400 for a professional screen-and-recoat — a worthwhile investment every 3-5 years to keep NB's humidity cycles from degrading your floor's protection.

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