

# Complete Guide to Renovating a House

## PART 10 : FINISHING OFF

With the structural work behind you, it's time to put the finishing touches to your renovation — this is the fun bit where you really start to see all your hard work pay off, says **Natasha Brinsmead**

**A**t last, it is time to put the final polish on your newly renovated home. Until now, it may have felt as though you've been making more mess than was there in the first place, as opposed to creating your dream home. Walls need to be prepared and painted, floors need to be sanded, covered or levelled and any woodwork — both external and internal — needs to be stripped, prepared and finished.

It can be easy to run out of steam a little at this stage of the project, but with just one final push, you will see all your previous work come together and at last, the house will be complete.

### WALLS

It is more than likely that you will have some newly plastered walls to deal with. Sadly, it is not just a case of slapping on some paint — bare plaster walls will need some preparation before you get to that stage.

Firstly, newly plastered walls will need time to dry out. If only a skim coat has been plastered then this should not take too long, but anything more will take a week or so — and even as long as up to six weeks. If you are impatient and paint the wall too soon, then moisture can become trapped and get into the plasterboard



or brickwork behind, causing efflorescence on the wall's surface.

Once the plaster has dried, a 'mist' coat should be applied. Dilute a water-based paint with one part water to four parts paint to achieve this. If you skip this stage, the paint will be sucked into the plaster, leaving you with dry and potentially flaky paint. Once the mist coat has dried, you can paint as usual.

If you are painting a kitchen or bathroom, choose a paint which is moisture resistant — there are paints specifically for this purpose, such as Dulux Bathroom Paint.

#### **Bringing Walls to Life**

Before you can paint on new plaster, you must first let it thoroughly dry out before applying a skim coat

### LINING WALLS



**If you have decided that some of the walls in your renovation are in a good enough condition not to be plastered, you will probably want to use a lining paper** before painting, in order to create a smooth surface — it is certainly a cheaper option than plastering. A good lining paper (usually one layer of 1000-grade lining paper is fine) will also improve the thermal properties of a room. Walls should be sanded using a 120-grade sandpaper, and any larger cracks or dents filled. Both ready-mixed and powder fillers are fine (try Polyfilla or Tettrion). You should then apply a coat of diluted PVA — one part to three parts water. Once dry, sand again and apply another layer of diluted PVA. Any gaps between sheets can be filled using a ready-mix joint cement or decorators caulk. Once this is dry, sand it lightly and vacuum. This can then be painted directly.

RIGHT: FARROW & BALL (FARROW-BALL.COM); BELOW: SHUTTERSTOCK



## EXTERNAL WOODWORK

Window and door cills, timber fascia boards and any other exterior work on older properties can have flaky paint, areas of rot or damage, or simply be painted a colour which you despise.

They are simple to repair – or in the case of serious damage – replace, but when it comes to the finishing touches such as painting, there are a few points to consider.

Old paint should be sanded, either by hand on small areas, or using a mechanical sander for larger areas. You could also consider using a heat gun and then scraping the existing paint away. If your woodwork was painted prior to 1960, it is likely the paint will contain lead, so wear a mask.

Firstly, never paint woodwork

when it is wet as the new paint will just blister and flake off. Also, never paint when rain is forecast.

Secondly, make sure you have all the necessary equipment, such as ladders, towers, steps or scaffolding – these can be hired from a local hire shop.

Use a suitable primer and paint. Dulux Weathershield Exterior Paint System has been specifically developed for the protection of exterior woodwork, and Sadolin has a good range, too.

A primer should be applied to bare wood, followed by two coats of undercoat and finally an exterior eggshell (try Farrow & Ball) or gloss. Always choose a paint that the manufacturers state is suitable for exterior use.

## MOULDINGS & BEAMS

In the case of damaged mouldings, it is often possible to either repair or replace them with matching designs. There is a huge range of timber mouldings to choose from and finding one to suit should not be too much of a problem. In the case of plaster mouldings, particularly those which are highly decorative, it may be necessary to seek the advice of a specialist who will be able to custom-make new pieces to fit.

With timber mouldings, smaller damaged areas can often be filled in with a wood filler if they are being painted.

Many renovators find themselves faced with old gloss paint when dealing with architrave, skirting and dado rails. There are several options here: the first is to strip the paint off, using either a chemical stripper or sanding by hand or machine.

Chemical strippers fall into two categories – caustic or solvent-based, with most professionals recommending solvent-based strippers. This task can be quite labour-intensive, but will remove a large build up of paint and is very effective – good ventilation, gloves, goggles and a dust mask or respirator will all be required.

Hand-sanding is a good way to strip paint from small areas, but is labour-intensive and messy. Hand-held power tools take some of the labour out of this job, but will once again cause a mess.

If you are repainting the woodwork, sanding will give a surface for the new paint to adhere to. But, if the thought of sanding all these fiddly areas sends you into a state of panic, consider using a bonding primer, such as Zinsser BIN Primer, Sealer and Stain Killer – it can be painted directly onto glossy surfaces, making the surface ready for painting. ▶

### info

Lots of old beams show evidence of woodworm, but much of this is likely to be historic and nothing to worry about – active infestations cause a fine dust around the holes

### know this

If you have very old beams in your home – covered in many years' worth of paint – it is worth contacting a specialist to strip them, using a gentle system



### LOOK ONLINE

You can get inspiration for finishing your interiors off by checking out the dozens of case studies available at [homebuilding.co.uk](http://homebuilding.co.uk)



## TIMBER FLOORING

Wooden floors are a much sought-after feature and if you have originals you can make good, it saves having to buy new flooring. You can also restore wood floors on a DIY basis — which is the cheapest option. Professionals tend to charge around £20-35/m<sup>2</sup> (meaning a 16m<sup>2</sup> room would cost around £400), while the same job could be done on a DIY basis for around £150 (see RIGHT for a good example of how to do it yourself over a weekend).

### know this

If you want to replicate original boards, head to your local reclamation yard — most have a large stock of reclaimed flooring



## A BEAUTIFUL WOODEN FLOOR

### STEP BY STEP

**1. Fill gaps.** The traditional solution is to force papier mâché into the gaps — mixing some wood stain in so it matches the boards. The modern solution is to use a product like Gapseal;

**2. Fill in bigger gaps with new wood.** Coat both sides of a suitably sized piece of wood with wood glue and then tap it in between the two boards. Once dry, plane the top off so that it becomes flush with the floor;

**3. Eliminate squeaks.** Before sanding the floor, you may have knocked down the nail heads with a punch. This sometimes loosens the grip of the nail, so the board becomes loose and squeaks. Drill a small hole through the board and into the joist, following this up with a screw. If you countersink the pilot hole with a larger drill first, the screw head will disappear when it is tightened up;

**4. Start sanding.** Working diagonally across the boards, start with the coarse grade sheets. Work slowly, overlapping each strip and keeping the machine moving all the time to stop ruts

forming. Crisscross the room in the opposite direction, then swap to the medium grade sheets and sand in the direction of the boards, finishing off with the fine abrasive. Use a round edging sander to finish off the edges of the room, working as close to the skirting boards as possible;

**5. Vacuum** and wipe away the residue and clean with white spirit;

**6. Brush a coat** of floor varnish onto the damaged area;

**7. Deal with scratches.** Deeper ones should be filled with wood filler before being rubbed down and treated, as in the previous step.

### Tool & Materials

- Floor sander (around £75 to hire for a weekend)
- Wood plane
- Electric sander
- Brushes
- Hammer and nails
- Screwdriver and screws
- Wet and dry sandpaper
- Gapseal (0800 088 7311)
- Strips of wood for filling
- Replacement floorboards
- Wood dye
- Varnish
- Drill and bits
- Wood filler
- White spirit and cleaner polish



## PARQUET

As with timber flooring, parquet floors can be sanded and resealed, but they do come with their own problems. Some of the very old parquet floors were nailed down and an adhesive used underneath.

The nails were often countersunk and the holes left were filled with wood filler. On sanding the floor, it is not unusual to reveal more and more nails with every pass of the sander — this quickly wears down the sandpaper and also means that the exposed nails will all require knocking in deeper, making it a time-consuming job.

If some blocks are missing, you can either use a block from an area that is not often seen, such as an understair cupboard, or have a new block made up which can then be stained to match.

## STONE FLOORING



### QUARRY TILES

Some people love them, others can't wait to get shot of them. Quarry tiles are really hardwearing and great for high-traffic areas.

Assuming you have dealt with any problems associated with quarry tiles, such as the fact that they were often laid directly onto a layer of sand, you will probably find that they have been covered over with carpet or rugs over the years and will require cleaning — some are even painted.

When quarry tiles were laid directly on to sand, they were simply treated with boiled linseed oil, which meant that any moisture simply came through the tiles and evaporated into the air.

Over the years however, the tiles will have once again become porous and will need oiling again. For a more hardwearing finish, and assuming your tiles are now laid over a damp-proof membrane, you can use a floor sealer.

### THAT'S IT... MISSED ONE?

And so, with the internal works complete, we're bringing this complete guide to renovating a house to a close. We hope you've found it useful and thank you for your many comments about it — we look forward to seeing the results of your projects!

If you've missed one of the previous nine parts of this series, then you can register (for free) at [homebuilding.co.uk](http://homebuilding.co.uk) where you'll be able to access any you've missed. ■

### STONE

Flagstones and other original stone floors look stunning, but often suffer from delamination, cracked mortar and can come loose. There are specialist companies who can solve these problems, but it is also something that can be carried out on a DIY basis, although it is fairly labour-intensive.

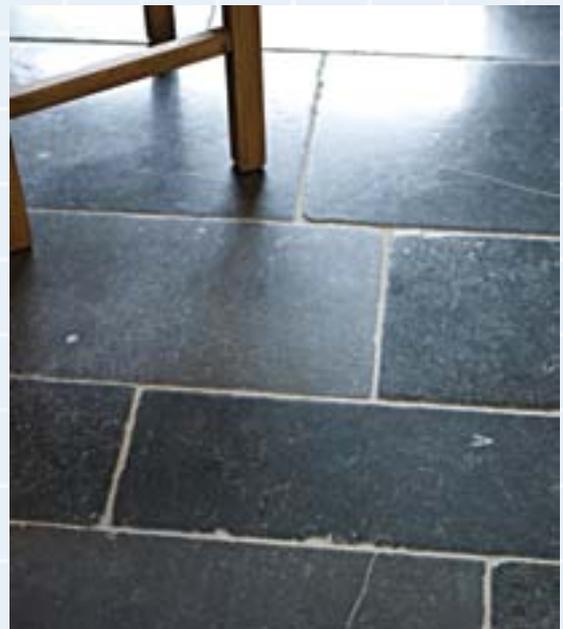
All loose material should first be removed. It's also common to find that some stone has come loose if the floor has been covered for a length of time.

Old pointing should be removed and replaced, preferably with a lime-based pointing in a suitable colour. Specialists would then use polycarbide discs to remove any surface contaminants such as paint or adhesive, giving a smoother surface, before the stone is wire brushed or steamed to remove ingrained dirt. The floor should then be washed and a non-acidic cleaning solution applied to lift any remaining grime.

Finally, flagstones should be impregnated with a linseed oil solution — although other stones may require sealing with an equally suitable product.

### know this

No original stone flooring?  
Try: **Fired Earth** ([firedearth.com](http://firedearth.com)); **Stone Age** ([stoneage.co.uk](http://stoneage.co.uk)); **Floors of Stone** ([floorsofstone.com](http://floorsofstone.com))



TERRACOTTA AND STONE FLOORS: FIRED EARTH (FIREDEARTH.COM)