

Fillers and how they behave.

Peter King, Floorcraft.

This may be old news to many who read this article – yet to others it could be a job saver, so read on and let us know your thoughts!

As a flooring contractor with many years of experience sanding and coating floors, I have seen a lot of different putties and fillers – each one promising that they are the best and will solve all my problems.

I used to apply filler such as oil putty using a putty knife and a ball of filler, pressing and slicing in one action, to fill nail holes. Cracks were a time-consuming task... These types used to fade quickly in sunlight, so I shifted to a powder type that mixed with water. Add in a paint tinter concentrate – then voila! Just don't mix too much, or it will set rock hard while you wait.

We could say that not one filler is perfect – we just must know how they behave in different circumstances and with various stains and coatings.


We cannot name names or compare brand specifics in this article, but the differences between similar looking fillers are quite significant. Some are clay-based with water as the primary agent; others are acrylic and so set hard and non-porous.

One filler I started using for the first time over ten years ago comes in various pre-tinted colours. Like most products, it behaves well when used correctly, but always use a slightly darker colour than you think when water-based coatings are used, as they tend to lighten out on the filler especially. A great feature of this type of filler is the ability to change colour with stains as it is very absorbent. I've started with pine filler in pine, then the customer changed their mind to a dark stain – no problem! Filler goes dark also!

It can be made easier to work with a flexible spatula/trowel by warming, either microwave or sit the pot in hot water. Even adding a little water is okay – but careful not too much or it will slump!

Another filler is a great choice if you are a solvent coating advocate – available in a range of colours, this acrylic filler dries to a very hard and stain/coating resistant finish. Great for building gloss over filler – something the previous filler can struggle with – always looking a half-coat behind (on **solvent-based** coatings). BUT – pick the right colour for the job, as it will not take stain colours well! The filler used must match the stained finished floor. Same workability as the prior, warm up to make softer, add a little water (again not too much!).

No doubt many other great fillers are available. I would love to hear your feedback on what works and what does not – email or write to the editor with your experiences!

Keep up the great work everyone, thanks for the opportunity to share my thoughts and experiences with you all. 

Best Regards, Peter King.

