

PEAK OAK

OAK FLOORING, OAK DOORS
& WROUGHT IRONWARE



How To Save Water Damaged Oak
Flooring

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Introduction

Disaster has struck.

Your beautiful oak floor has been damaged by water and is therefore completely useless right?

Traditional solid oak flooring is susceptible to movement caused by changes in humidity and so you should not use solid oak flooring in areas such as the kitchen and bathroom. High humidity can result in solid oak boards cupping and warping as they expand.

Engineered oak flooring is much less prone to these changes in humidity and therefore more suited to areas such as the kitchen and bathroom.

But what happens to engineered boards which have been completely water-damaged and battered?

Are your boards still salvageable?

In this test we look to discover just that...

Please Note: The purpose of this test is to demonstrate what we would do if the option of replacing the boards was not available. Generally in a situation such as this, we would recommend replacing any damaged boards.



For the purpose of this test we decided to focus solely on some of our 180mm Character Grade Engineered Oak Flooring.

The boards chosen were the worst affected of a number of boards which were recently battered by the elements and left outside. In this environment the boards suffered from heavy water damage.

The first step is to allow time for the boards to dry out. With this step complete, a true damage assessment can be made.

1. Width Of Boards

When in contact with water, traditional wooden flooring can suffer from a number of serious problems, leaving the boards unusable. These problems include:

- **Crowning** – Where the floor boards edges are lower than its centre, giving a convex appearance across the board.
- **Cupping** – Where the centre of a board is lower than its edges, giving a concave appearance across the board.

These changeable conditions can lead to the boards expanding and contracting. This can result in the width of the board changing.



As mentioned before, the width of our engineered oak boards were 180mm. After heavy water damage, the width of the boards remained exactly the same.



2. Sanding Water Marks

The marks left by the water were perhaps the most obvious of the problems caused. In some areas the water had left large dark areas which had stained the wood. In other areas these markings were less prominent but still visible nonetheless.

To remove some of these marks, the only option was complete sanding of the top surface.

After sanding the boards, the water marks in some of the less damaged areas were fully removed. For some of the more heavily damaged areas, the sanding only lessened the damage rather than completely remove it. Despite multiple attempts at sanding, some of these marks could not be removed



3. Finishing The Boards

Given that some of the marks could not be removed, we decided the best policy would be to find an appropriate finish to hide any remaining marks.

For this, we decided to finish the water damaged oak boards using the [Blanchon Hard Waxoil](#).

Rather than using their standard satin, natural or ultra matt finishes, we decided that their colour stains would probably be a better option for coating up the boards. As the water marks were quite dark in tone, we chose a selection of their darker finishes - [Smoked Oak](#), [Graphite](#), [Walnut](#), and [Black](#).

We applied two coats of each stain to different sections of the boards using the rag/cloth method.

Smoked Oak

Two coats of the Smoked Oak finish was one of the better finishes to use for the water damaged boards.

Although not completely hiding any marks, these marks in fact became part of the finish. In our opinion they actually added to the character of the board.





Graphite

Graphite wasn't really suitable for the job.

Some of the more prominent marks from the stained oak were still visible – and not in a good way!





Walnut

The Walnut finish gave a similar result to the Smoked Oak.

Again, some of the more intense marks were still there, but looked so much better than the unfinished board.





Black

The Black finish did a good job of disguising some of the darker marks, but didn't hide them all.





Conclusion

Whether your boards are salvageable, very much depends on the extent of the original damage.

We've shown that when the boards have remained at their original width, some boards can be salvaged.

For lightly water damaged boards, the marks can often be sanded away. For marks that couldn't be sanded away, they can sometimes be hidden or blended in with the help of a finish.

We always recommend using a top quality finish once the flooring has been laid.

High quality hard wax oils are water repellent, which will help to protect your floor from damage.