

Floor Sanding Grit Chart

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Quick Reference: Grit Sequence by Scenario

Scenario	Grit Sequence	Machine	Sheets / 200 sq ft
Full refinish over old poly	36 → 60 → 80 → 100	Drum sander	4–6 per grit
Bare wood (no old finish)	60 → 80 → 100	Drum sander	3–4 per grit
Edger (perimeter)	<i>Match drum grit at every stage</i>	Clarke Super 7R	4–6 discs per grit
Buffer — clear coat prep	120 screen	Buffer / polisher	2–3 screens
Buffer — stain prep	150 screen	Buffer / polisher	2–3 screens
Between finish coats	180–220 screen	Buffer / polisher	1–2 screens

Grit-by-Grit Breakdown

Grit	Classification	Purpose	Key Notes
36	Very Coarse	Remove old finish, paint, adhesive	Only when thick coating exists. Too aggressive for bare wood.
60	Coarse	Transition cut; reveals clean wood	First pass on bare wood. Most important grit change in the sequence.
80	Medium	Workhorse grit; floor starts looking finished	Most-used grit in refinishing. VA 80/100 combo packs save ~15%.
100	Medium-Fine	Final drum sander pass	Wood should feel smooth with grain. No visible scratch at low angle.
120	Fine	Buffer screen for clear coat prep	Blends drum + edger scratch patterns. Use on buffer, not drum.
150	Fine	Buffer screen for stain prep	Finer scratch accepts stain more evenly than 120.
180–220	Very Fine	Between coats of finish	Light screening only. Do not use on drum sander.

Which Grit Do I Start With?

Floor Condition	Starting Grit	Full Sequence
New / unfinished hardwood	60	60 → 80 → 100 → 120 screen
Light wear, intact finish	60	60 → 80 → 100 → 120 screen
Standard refinish (1–2 coats poly)	36	36 → 60 → 80 → 100 → 120 screen
Heavy poly / multiple coats	36	36 → 60 → 80 → 100 → 120 screen
Paint removal	24 or 36	24 → 36 → 60 → 80 → 100 → 120 screen
Shellac / old varnish / adhesive	24 or 16	16/24 → 36 → 60 → 80 → 100 → 120 screen
Screen & recoat (light refresh)	120–150	120 or 150 screen only (buffer)

The one rule you cannot break: Never skip more than one grit. Each grit erases the scratch pattern of the grit before it. Skip a grit and those scratches show through your finish.