

# COPING WITH AWKWARD FLOORS



## Coping With Awkward Floors

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#### 1. Introduction

We have all been there, you practice and practice until your balance is perfect and then on competition day it feels more like ice-skating than a dance competition. Awkward floors can really affect your performance and can often be your downfall. This manual aims to provide you with some handy tips for overcoming problem floor that we have found helpful over the years.

#### 2. Slippery Floors

Sometimes referred to as '**fast**' floors. Slippery floors can be downright dangerous and certainly impede your performance as you lose traction and generally feel unsteady and unsafe on the dance floor, fortunately there are some tricks you can use to help gain the traction you need.

The most obvious is to wear proper, well maintained dance shoes. Dance shoes have what is known as a non-skid sole, which is typically made of chrome leather. It has a suede type of feel to it which properly maintained really helps your grip.

Over time and use the suede feel to these soles is worn away leaving a hard, shiny surface. At this point the shoes have lost much of their non-skid properties. Use a wire brush to gently brush the sole of the shoe, which will restore the finish and non-skid properties.

Eventually this sole will wear away with brushing, if after brushing your shoes stop recovering their non-skid properties it is time for either a new pair of shoes or more cheaply, a new pair of 'stick on' soles. Non-skid soles also tend to wear out quicker if the practice floors you use are dirty.

All you have to do is trace around the outside of your shoe on the one-size stick on soles and then cut the soles to the right size and shape using your tracing as a guide. The phase is to roughen both the shoe and your new sole with a wire brush, coat in the glue provided and stick them together. Use a hammer to flatten any air bubbles and really whack the sole into place. Leave overnight before use and hey presto, as good as new.

Sometimes even properly maintained soles do not provide enough traction and so time for a little trick, rubbing moisturiser or castor oil into the bottom of your sole. Oil? To help you stick? It sounds very strange but a little bit of moisturiser or oil on the bottom of your sole really helps you to bite into the floor. If you are not

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convinced try it at a practice before a competition and feel the difference. If you happen to have none of the above on you and you need to gain extra grip in a hurry try lemonade (not diet) or water. Lemonade is better because of the sugar content but water will do. The effect will be similar but will not last as long as moisturiser or castor oil.

Take note that some organisers and studio owners do not like people pouring moisturiser or water into the floor. It is better to rub the stuff directly on your sole. If you are unsure if the organisers or studio owners will object then ask them. Better safe than sorry.

If you are still slipping there is something wrong with your dancing. Make sure that your weight is always underneath you rather than positioned to one side, front or rear. This should correct your problem.

If you are an organiser or studio owner and find that your floor is very slippery one way to treat the whole floor is to sprinkle '**Persil**' or other washing powder over the floor. The grittier the powder the better. Over time this does slow the floor down.

### **3. Sticky Floors**

Exactly the opposite and just as disruptive to your well rehearsed dancing. Sticky floor make the more technically able dancers look like beginners as they are forced to lift their feet up to avoid stumbling. Sticky floors are just as horrible to dance on as slippery floors but at least you are less likely to injure yourself!

There are several ways to try to prevent your shoes from sticky floors:

The first trick or rather lack of trick is do not brush your shoes. The second is to deliberately make the sole lose its non-skid properties by practicing on a carpet if there is one at the venue. The sort of coarse hard wearing carpets found in community halls is ideal.

If you are still struggling try a fine talcum powder sprinkled over your shoes. While coarse materials help you stick, fine materials often let you reduce your traction on the floor.

If you are still having trouble you will simply have to learn how to cope. You cannot be as 'into the floor' as you would like to be and must learn to support more of your weight with the leg that is not moving.