
A GUIDE TO WOOD FINISHING

HOW TO START:

The most important ingredient in a beautiful finish is a good start. Here's what you'll need to do. It helps to assemble the right tools before you start the job. Here are the basic wood finishing steps and the equipment you'll need.

For Sanding

- Several sheets of both medium grade (100 to 120 grit) and fine grade (160 to 220 grit) sandpaper. The medium grade will help remove rougher areas and old stain. The fine grade is good for smoothing and touch-ups. Try to avoid using steel wool – the metal particles tend to cling and can detract from your finish.
- A sandpaper block to help on flat surfaces. You can find these in most hardware stores, or you can make your own. Just wrap sandpaper around a block that's approximately 2" x 3" x 4".

For Staining

- A bristle brush, synthetic brush or foam brush applicator. You can also use cheese cloth or rags to apply stain.
- Rubber gloves. You may choose to wear them to protect your hands.
- A plastic drop cloth to protect your floor.
- Paint thinner for cleaning brushes.

For Finishing

- A quality 2" or 3" pure china bristle brush.
- An artist's brush with firm bristles. You'll use it to pick off lint before the finish dries.
- Fine grade sandpaper or a nylon sanding pad. Use the sandpaper to smooth the surface after the first coat of finish has dried, then use either the sandpaper or the pad to rough up the surface a little between coats.
- A fairly dust-free work area so the finish will remain as clean and dust-free as possible, however, for your own safety, make sure the work area is well ventilated.
- A painter's tack cloth for removing fine dust particles. This will help you achieve a smooth finish.

SANDING

Sanding is the first and most important step toward a professional-looking finish. When preparing for staining and sealing, it's best to use aluminum oxide sandpaper. It's available at most hardware stores and home center.

Follow these steps when sanding new wood.

1. Get everything out of the way. Remove hardware and excess glue (stain won't stick to it), set nails and tighten screws.
2. Sand first with medium grade paper. Stroking in long, straight lines with the grain will bring out the natural color of the wood.
3. Sand again with your fine sandpaper for an even smoother finish.
4. Clean the surface with a tack cloth or a cloth dampened with mineral spirits. Your wood is now ready for applying wood patch, wood filler or sealer (if necessary), stain or clear finish.

STAIN CONTROLLER

Some softwoods, like pine, fir and poplar, may absorb stain too quickly or unevenly, so it's best to apply a wood sealer before staining.

Old Masters Stain Controller prepares unfinished softwoods to accept an even, professional-looking stain.

Apply a light coat of sealer, wiping off excess. Allow this to dry, then apply a light coat of stain. Make sure to test for stain color on a hidden section before staining the entire piece.

HOW TO STAIN

There's nothing like the rich beauty of stained wood. Here is a step-by-step guide and a few helpful hints for best results.

Stains add a rich new color to wood and enhance the grain even in relatively lifeless woods. Here's how to get that rich wood finish – even if you've never stained before.

1. First, test for color. There's nothing worse than discovering that you've got the wrong color after you've already started. Try out your stain on a hidden section or scrap of similar wood.
2. Clean the surface area and follow up with a cloth to eliminate as much dust as possible.
3. Apply the stain with a brush, foam brush applicator or cloth, making sure that you get smooth, even coverage.
4. Depending on the humidity and temperature, allow the stain to set for 5 to 15 minutes. The longer you let it set, the deeper your color will be.
5. While it's still wet, wipe off the stain with a clean cloth, taking care not to remove too much from corners and edges. Wipe across the grain first to work stain into the wood pores. The final wipe should always be with the grain.
6. If you want more color, repeat this process until you get the rich tone you desire.
7. Allow the stain to dry for at least 4 hours, more if it is cool or humid, before applying finish.

HOW TO FINISH

Now you can see the rich color of your stained wood. Here's how to intensify and protect its beauty.

Finishing can give your wood an even richer look, intensifying the color and protecting the wood. To do the job right, there are some things you'll want to do before you start.

- Keep doors and windows open for ventilation. Besides being a good safety precaution, this will accelerate drying times.
- Give the wood a final tack cloth wiping to remove all dust.
- Don't stir or shake gloss finish.
- Stir satin or semi-gloss finishes gently with a paint stick by lifting from the bottom of the can. **DON'T SHAKE THE CAN.** This will raise bubbles that might appear later in the finish.

1. Use a pure china bristle brush to apply light, even coats rather than one thick coat. This will minimize possible drips and wrinkles as the clear finish dries.
2. Wet workable area by applying the finish in brush-width strokes along the wood grain. Final strokes should be from end to end of the piece for a smooth, even finish.
3. While working, pick off the dust particles with your artist's brush. To prevent runs, just stroke the wet finish off the edge in the direction of the grain with an almost dry brush.
4. For better protection, apply a minimum of two coats. Allow at least 6 to 8 hours for the first coat on new wood to dry and at least 12 hours drying time or overnight for the following coats or when applying finish over previously stained or sealed surfaced. Re-coat liquid plastic (polyurethane) within 24 hours for optimal adhesion.
5. Be sure to allow at least 24 hours before using your newly finished surface.