



HOUSING

Three steps to refinishing furniture no. 9.519

by C. Birdsong¹

Quick Facts...

Do prepare a place of work.

Do allow ample ventilation.

Do remove all hardware.

Do test the stain.

Do read labels and follow directions.

Do putty all cracks, crevices and nail holes with suitable putty.

Don't paint over dust, grease, oil or wax.

Don't paint or varnish over a glossy surface.

Don't pile on heavy coats of finishes.

Remove the old finish

Use a good quality (heavy-bodied) paint and varnish remover. Apply the remover liberally, brushing in one direction only and in one application. Do not rebrush the area, even in the same direction.

Wait until the surface is completely checked before attempting to remove the stripper and old finish. If not completely checked, apply more remover.

Use a wide putty knife to remove old finish and always in the direction of the grain of the wood.

Once the old finish is removed, use a paint remover wash of lacquer thinner or denatured alcohol to dissolve any remaining residue. **Be sure to read and follow directions on the container.**

Paint that has settled into the grain of the wood can be removed by coating the surface with a 50/50 mixture of denatured alcohol and shellac. Brush the mixture onto the surface and let it set 72 hours to a week. Remove with paint and varnish remover as noted above.

Prepare the wood for new finish

Remove grease spots before using a bleaching agent. Use benzine or commercial cleaner to remove animal fat. Use acetone to remove vegetable oils.

Remove dark spots or lighten wood with one of the following bleach solutions:

- Two tablespoons oxalic acid crystals dissolved in 1 cup hot water, or
- a commercial bleach, or
- a household bleach.

When bleaching is completed, wash off bleached area with a solution of one cup household ammonia and one quart water. Allow surface to dry. Reglue joints if necessary.

Smooth the surface when it has dried with fine sandpaper. Sand **with** the grain to prevent scratching (Figure 1). On flat surfaces, a sanding block is advisable to prevent unevenness and rounded corners. For curved or irregular surfaces, tear the paper into strips and use it with a block. Pads of medium to fine steel wool are excellent for smoothing difficult areas.

If greater smoothness is desired, use a commercial sanding sealer or make one of your own by diluting shellac with three parts of alcohol. Brush on, let dry; sand. Wipe sanded surface with a cloth dampened with turpentine, or a commercial tack cloth, to remove dust.

Apply stain if needed or desired. Ready-to-use pigmented wiping stains are easiest for the beginner. Use fine steel wool to apply stain, rubbing it into the wood to make the color darker than desired (Figure 2). Let it stand five to 10 minutes and wipe off the excess. Remember that staining should allow the wood

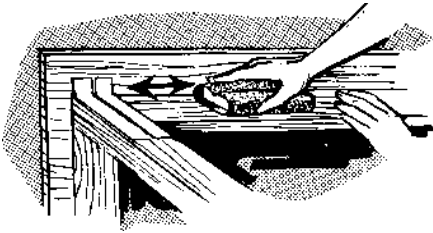


Figure 1: Sand with the grain.

grain to stand out. Let it dry at least 24 hours before applying finish coat(s).

Follow directions on container.

Since stains are available in a wide variety of colors, it is best to “test” the one you have chosen. Apply the stain to a scrap of wood of the same species—or to an inconspicuous section of the piece (back or bottom). For a true idea of the final color, the finish that is to follow the stain also should be applied to the test spot. If the stain is too dark it can be lightened by thinning with turpentine or mineral spirits.

Fill open-grained wood, such as oak, walnut and mahogany, with a stained paste wood filler. Follow instructions on the label. If you plan to use a wood seal finish, use one coat of seal before filling with paste wood filler. If a urethane finish is planned, be sure the filler is compatible.

Apply finish

There are many types of finishes—some clear, some opaque. The kind chosen depends upon:

1. the kind of wood that is going to be finished
2. the use that will be made of the furniture, and
3. personal taste.

Clear finishes

Penetrating resin or wood seal. Use the thin type in several coats. This finish is easy to apply, can be patched easily, dries quickly and does not scratch. In most cases it resists heat, water and alcohol. Check the label. It is not for exterior use.

Use it only over bare wood. Use at least four coats of seal. Rub the seal on with nylon hosiery in circular motions. Remove the excess that does not sink into the wood. Allow it to dry several hours. Between each coat, rub with fine sandpaper, if needed. When dry, wax if desired.

Old-fashioned varnish. This has the disadvantage of scratching easily. Newer varnishes are polyurethanes. These are more scratch resistant. Follow directions on the label for application procedures.

Regular varnish. Mix half varnish and half turpentine for the first coat. For the second and remaining coats, apply one part turpentine to three parts varnish. Protect the object from dust. Let each coat dry 24 hours. Sand lightly between coats. Rub the final finish with pumice and oil, if desired, to remove shine and add smoothness.

Shellac. This is easy to use, requires several coats, has low resistance to water damage, and alcohol and other chemicals may soften the finish. **Special note:** Shellac may be used as a first coat. It can be used over stains to prevent bleeding. Never use urethane varnishes over shellac.

Lacquers. Most are intended for spray application, although brushing lacquers are available. They are difficult for the amateur to get smooth.

Antique finishes

If the finish still is in good condition, antiquing can be done over the previously painted or finished surface without removal of the old finish.

Clean wood with liquid sandpaper or trisodium phosphate to remove all old wax or polish. Apply a base coat of flat or gloss enamel or a commercial antique base. Allow it to dry and sand it lightly. Apply a second coat of base. Allow it to dry. Apply a glaze coat (homemade or commercial) by sections; carvings should be done first. Let it dry 15 minutes.

Wipe the glaze with cheesecloth, gauze or textured cloth. The more glaze removed, the more visible the base coat. Experiment until you achieve the effect desired. Glazing can be wiped off with paint thinner. Once the proper effect is achieved, allow the glaze to dry thoroughly. Apply a satin finish of polyurethane varnish as a protection.

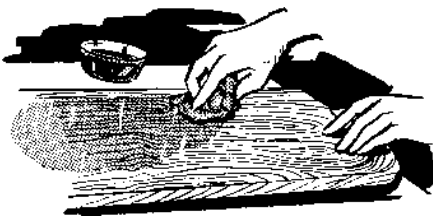


Figure 2: Apply stain.

Special effects are possible by varying the materials used for wiping off the glaze. Use a cleaning tissue, paper toweling, crumpled newspaper or plastic, a piece of carpet or other materials to wipe or pat the surface. A stiff brush produces a simulated wood grain.

A **worm-hole or spatter effect** is obtained by dipping a stiff brush, whisk broom or toothbrush into the glaze or a flat black enamel, bending the bristles back and releasing them. Do not overload the brush and practice on a piece of paper first. If uncertain about the spattered effect, wait until after the glaze has dried and a protective coat is applied. When this is thoroughly dry, the spatter effect can be tried and removed without harming the glazing underneath the protective coating.

Marbleizing can be achieved by putting the glaze on a flat sheet of aluminum foil or other disposable surface instead of on the piece of furniture. Crumple up a piece of plastic film or newspaper and press it into the glaze, then lightly stamp it on the surface to be marbleized. If more than one color is used in marbleizing, apply the second color immediately. Simulated slab marble can be achieved by soaking a piece of string in thinned glaze. Trail this wet string across the surface, making the vein lines straight and at random angles.

Antique glaze--a homemade glazing formula. Use either burnt umber or other colors in oil as desired.

Mix thoroughly into a small container 1 tablespoon satin sheen varnish and 1 tablespoon color in oil. Add an additional 3 tablespoons of varnish and stir well. Add 4 tablespoons mineral spirits or turpentine and stir thoroughly. This produces a glaze of thin consistency.

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