

Wood care FAQs answered

Was high school shop class your last experience with wood care? Don't fret. These simple tips will take you through what you need to know for your next wood project.



Tips/Steps

Do I have to apply a clear coat after staining?

While staining creates a rich, deep colour that highlights natural wood grain, it does not provide long-term protection. Without a protective top coat, wood can be damaged easily due to contact with water, food or sharp objects. A polyurethane top coat protects the wood from scratches, stains and water damage. Spar Varnish should be used on outdoor wood to protect it from weather damage and UV rays.

Do I need a Pre-Stain or Wood Conditioner?

Pre-Stain or Wood Conditioner is often used on soft wood such as pine. The inconsistent porous nature of soft woods can result in a stain finish that is blotchy or uneven. Wood conditioner or pre-stain acts as a base coat before staining by filling in the wood pores for more even colour coverage.

How do I apply polyurethane?

Polyurethane should be applied using a high-quality brush. The polyurethane should be applied in light, even coats, always brushing with the grain. Create a thin overlap from coat to coat but do not over brush. Three coats are recommended for adequate durability. Always follow manufacturer's recommendations for dry times.

[Continue to next page...](#)

How do I apply stain?

STEP 1: Before applying, test the colour in an inconspicuous area to ensure it's the colour you want. Make sure the wood is the same type as the rest of your piece.

STEP 2: Stir the contents thoroughly before use. Some stain colour may settle at the bottom of the can so it is important to stir thoroughly, just like you would for paint.

Next, apply the stain using a high-quality synthetic bristle brush, foam brush or clean, lint-free cloth. We prefer a lint-free cloth as it allows greater control during the application process. Apply the stain liberally in the direction of the grain until the wood is saturated on top. Allow the stain to set on the wood according to manufacturer's directions. We recommend five minutes for Varathane® Wood Stain. For less colour wipe immediately; for more colour allow the full five minutes for absorption. Do not let the stain set longer than five minutes as it will begin to dry.

STEP 3: Wipe off the excess stain in the direction of the wood grain. Allow the stain to dry according to label directions before applying a protective clear top coat such as a polyurethane or lacquer.

How much sanding is necessary?

Sanding is an important step that can affect the overall aesthetic outcome of your wood project. Start by selecting the right sandpaper. Inferior paper will wear out quickly, load up rapidly with sanding dust and create broad, deep scratches that are difficult to remove.

STEP 1: Start with the coarsest grit of sandpaper (80- to 100-grit) to remove any large scratches. We think that it's okay to use a random-orbital sander, but some purists claim that all sanding should be done by hand. You can decide what's best for your project.

Always sand in the direction of the wood grain, never against. Remove sanding dust before moving on to the next round of sandpaper. Sanding dust can be removed using a lint-free cloth lightly dampened with mineral spirits.

STEP 2: Now, move to 120- to 150-grit paper and sand the entire surface. Remove the sanding dust.

STEP 3: Finally, move to fine 180-grit sandpaper for a final sweep over the wood surface. Remember to remove all sanding dust before beginning the stain application.