

# Wood Finishes

Finishes are applied to wood to protect and beautify the surface. It is important to choose a finish that will suit the project and be easy to apply. Figure 38-1 lists some clear finishes that bring out the natural beauty of wood.

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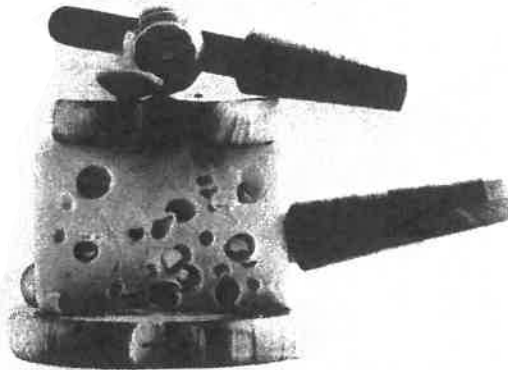
### HOW TO SELECT A FINISH

1. For simple outdoor items such as bird-houses and rabbit hutches, apply exterior paint or enamel.
2. For outdoor sports items such as gun

### TRANSPARENT (SEE-THROUGH) FINISHES

Finish (solvent)	Application	Drying Time	Durability	Color	Appearance	Notes
Wax (none)	Hand rub with soft cloth.	½ hour	Good moisture resistance.	Tends to yellow with age.	Soft sheen	Paste wax can be used for sealer.
Shellac (alcohol)	Wide brush or hand wipe.	30–60 min.	Poor. Water turns shellac white. No outdoor use.	Orange shellac dries honey-colored. White shellac dries clear.	Sheen to gloss	Good as a liquid wood filler on some woods. Better as a sealer.
Oil: Boiled Linseed (turpentine or mineral spirits)	Rub with soft cloth.	Indefinite	Won't peel or crack.	Darkens quickly.	Soft sheen	Driers can be added to increase hardness.
Oils: Sealacell, Watco, Tung (mineral spirits)	Rub with soft cloth.	2 days	Won't peel or crack. Better moisture resistance.	Dull, but shines to satin luster when steel wool is used between coats.	Soft sheen	Finish is more durable than boiled linseed oil.
Varnish (turpentine or mineral spirits)	Bristle brush or foam polybrush.	1–1½ days	Good weather and wear resistance.	Spar varnish tends to darken.	Sheen to gloss	Avoid shaking varnish. Apply several thin coats. Finish in dust-free place.
Lacquer brushing (lacquer thinner)	Brush (sable or camel).	4 hours	Fair moisture resistance, good durability.	Won't discolor wood.	High gloss	Foam polybrush can be used.

38-1. Characteristics and uses of transparent finishes.



**38-2** For wood projects to be used with food, such as these cheese cutting boards, rub on light mineral oil as a finish.

stocks, baseball stands, and other game equipment, use a simple penetrating finish (one that soaks into the wood).

3. For indoor novelties, use a simple transparent finish or interior paint or enamel.

4. For furniture and accessories, apply a penetrating finish for simpler pieces or a standard finish (described in this chapter) for larger furniture.

5. For kitchen items that come in contact with foods, such as cutting boards or salad bowls, use an oil that will not become rancid (spoiled). Light mineral oil is a good choice. Fig. 38-2.

## SIMPLE FINISHES

### Wax Finish

Repair any cracks, dents, or holes. Sand the surface of the project. Then apply one of the finishes described here.

1. Apply a coat of shellac to the surface. See Chapter 42.

2. Rub down with fine steel wool.

3. Apply a coat of paste wax. Let it dry about ten minutes. Rub in with a soft wool rag.

### Natural Finish

1. Apply a thin coat of oil mixture (1 part boiled linseed oil, 1 part solvent, and 1 part

varnish). Use a rag to apply. Allow to dry for 15 minutes. Wipe with a clean, dry cloth.

2. Brush on a coat of thin white shellac (two parts shellac and one part alcohol). Allow the surface to dry about 24 hours. Rub down with fine steel wool.

3. Apply a second coat of shellac.

4. After the shellac is dry, cover the surface with paste wax.

## STANDARD FINISH

While the finishing material may vary, all finishing is done about the same way. These are the major steps:

1. *Bleaching*. This step is done only if very light finishes are to be applied. For natural and darker finishes, you may skip it.

2. *Staining*. Staining adds the desired color to wood or improves the natural color. For a completely natural finish, staining may not be required. See Chapter 40.

3. *Sealing*. It is usually a good idea to seal the stain to prevent bleeding of the stain into the topcoat. A *wash coat* (one part shellac to seven parts alcohol) is good for most stains. If the topcoat will be lacquer, apply a lacquer sealer.

4. *Filling*. Paste filler is used on open-grained woods and a liquid filler on other woods. See Chapter 41.

5. *Sealing*. A sealer should again be applied over the filler. It should be a commercial sealer, a wash coat of shellac, or a lacquer sealer.

6. *Applying a standard finish*. A shellac, varnish, or lacquer topcoat is applied after sealing. Usually two or more coats are required. Always sand the surface with 5/0 sandpaper after each

coat is dry. To give a rubbed finish to varnish, rub on pumice or rottenstone after the second and third coats. (See Chapter 39.) After the second and the final coat, all finishes can be made smoother by first rubbing with pumice in oil and then rottenstone in oil, using a felt pad. Always

apply a coat of paste wax to protect the final finish.

There are also many wax and penetrating finishes on the market that you can use. These can be bought at hardware stores and home improvement centers.

### QUESTIONS

1. What kind of finish should you choose for a birdhouse?
2. What should be chosen for projects to be used in the kitchen?
3. Describe the way to apply a wax finish.
4. Tell how to apply a natural finish using boiled linseed oil.
5. Describe the steps for applying a standard finish.
6. Is bleaching done for all standard finishes?