

# Refinishing Old Furniture

## oil finish

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You can treat old furniture in various ways, but one method that has won much favor is an oil finish. A good oil finish is especially desirable for table and dresser tops because it is not likely to show spots or rings from hot plates or liquids.

Wax is not entirely necessary if furniture is properly oiled and rubbed, but rubbing is necessary--a great deal of rubbing.

The old coating should be taken off by means of a good paint and varnish remover and the surface rubbed with a fine sand paper or triple o steel wool. See that the surface is smooth and free from dust before putting on the oil.

The same mixture is used that is recommended for polishing furniture---one-third turpentine and two-thirds boiled linseed oil. Have soft cloths handy, and a good polishing cloth such as an old cement bag thoroughly cleaned and washed, or a woolen cloth.

The oil mixture can be used hot or cold on plain surfaces, although it takes longer for the cold mixture to penetrate the wood. Hot oil sinks into the wood rapidly and brings out a rich color; hence, it is usually preferred.

The best way to heat the oil is to use a double boiler. This reduces the danger of the oil catching fire. Add the turpentine later away from the fire.

The oil and turpentine mixture is put on generously with a soft cloth and then rubbed into the wood until the wood has absorbed all



of the oil it will take. This rubbing and absorption may take five minutes or a half hour depending upon the condition of the wood, the temperature of the oil, the room where you are working and the weather.

After the oil will no longer penetrate, wipe off the excess. Special care needs to be taken to get the excess oil out of crevices and corners, otherwise what is left will form a sticky film. And it's just as necessary to oil the underside of a table leaf as it is to oil the top. It will help prevent warping.

The next step is to rub the finish for 10 to 20 minutes with your polishing cloth. A fairly heavy cloth is preferred because it develops heat with the rubbing, and that helps in finishing. If the grain or the wood is raised with the oiling, it can be rubbed down smooth with steel wool.

The first coat of oil is only a starter. To obtain a soft, satiny effect, four or even a dozen applications of oil will be needed -- each coat being allowed to soak into the wood before another is put on. If the surface is oily when your hand touches it for a few minutes, it is not dry enough for more oil. In dry, warm weather, it will take about two days for drying between the first and second coats of oil and later coats may require a week in dry weather. In moist weather it takes longer for the surface to dry. The process can be called complete when no dull spots remain.

One advantage in the oil finish is that the furniture can be used while it is in the process of being finished. Then a polish of oil and turpentine will keep the finish in good condition through the years.

One word of caution--polishing cloths soaked with oil are highly combustible and need to be washed or burned to prevent their becoming a fire hazard.

There you have all the steps--take off the old finish, smooth the wood surface, rub in a good oil mixture and polish. Oil and polish some more, rub until you have the finish you want. Dispose of all dangerous cloths each time.

## SIMPLE FINISHES FOR FURNITURE

Penetrating wood sealers are being used increasingly on furniture, wood walls and floors. They produce a natural, hard, durable finish. They are easy to apply and may be ragged on with a lintless cloth (old nylon or rayon garments) which can be discarded after use. Sealers are quick drying and resistant to scratching. The sealer sinks into the wood and fills cavities of the wood cells. It becomes a part of the wood rather than building up a glossy coating on the surface. Worn places in the finish may be patched by cleaning and then adding sealer without showing lapping around the edges.

If the wood is to be stained, buy the stain intended for use with the sealer you have selected. Sealers are available in clear as well as colors such as oak, pine, maple, walnut and mahogany. Many additional colors may be made by mixing or by adding clear seal.

Three consistencies of sealers are available -- thin, medium and heavy. The thin is recommended for use in homes. It goes on more smoothly and with less "piling up" especially on close-grained woods. Color may be added to a clear sealer by using colors in oil or color varnishes.

To apply the sealer:

If stain is used, wait 24 hours before applying sealer over it. Follow manufacturer's directions for staining. Apply sealer generously with clean nylon hose. After 10 to 20 minutes, wipe off all sealer that has not been absorbed in the wood. Allow to dry 24 hours. When ready to apply succeeding coats, rub surface lightly with 3/0 steel wool. Wipe with tack rag. Make several applications. To obtain satin-like smoothness and a hard finish, apply 3 to 5 coats on chairs and legs of any furniture. Nine to 21 coats may be applied on table tops. Allow the final coat to dry for 1 week; rub with pumice and oil and steel wool.

**CAUTION** - Cloths soaked with penetrating seal are highly flammable and should be discarded or kept in tightly closed containers.