



## General Wood Finishing Tips for 4-H Judges

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Easy Way to Determine Type of Finish: Touch the finish in an inconspicuous place with a cotton ball dampened with acetone nail polish remover. If the cotton ball sticks, or the finish softens it is varnish, lacquer or shellac. If there's no effect, it's paint or polyurethane. Some strippers work better on certain finishes. Read the label on the stripper.

Stripper: Apply a thick coat. Do not brush back and forth. Allow to sit on wood time indicated on label (usually 15 - 20 minutes). Use a plastic scraper rather than metal to prevent damaging the wood surface. Lift paint or polyurethane rather than wiping it off, which can push loosened paint back into the wood grain. Use a toothbrush to remove finish from heavily carved or hard-to-reach areas.

Raise Shallow Dents: Apply a small amount of distilled water to the wood and allow to absorb into wood. Heat an iron on low and move over the dented area carefully.

Sanding: Purchase good quality sandpaper. Keep surface free of dust during sanding. Begin with a lower grit (120) and work progressively higher (240-320) or to silicon paper (600). Check weight of sandpaper. "A" weight paper is the lightest, most flexible kind and preferable for most jobs. Use a sanding block for large flat areas.

Test for Rough Spots: Put an old sock or nylon hose on your hand and rub the wood lightly. If you hit a snag, lightly sand until you have a smooth uniform surface.

Cleaning Wood Surfaces: After sanding and before applying stain and/or finish wipe entire wood surface with a "tack cloth" (approximate cost \$1.00) or a clean soft cloth dampened with mineral spirits. Be sure to turn cloth frequently and remoisten to prevent spreading dust rather than picking it up.

Wood Conditioners: Use on softer woods such as pine, fir, maple and poplar before staining to prevent "blotching" caused by variations in the wood's density. Softer areas absorb more stain than harder areas, making the soft spots darker.

Stain: Stir before and during application.

Applicators: Use a good quality natural bristle brush for oil-based topcoats. Use a synthetic brush with a chisel shape for water-based topcoats. Poor quality brushes make it difficult to obtain a clean, even coat. Old clean cotton T-shirts work great for applying wipe-on finishes. Foam brushes often leave bubbles in the finish.

Brush Marks: Caused by going back over the surface too often.

Bubbles: Stir contents of finish container, don't shake. After dipping your brush, do not scrape excess material on the side of the can. Bubbles may also be caused by poor quality brushes or careless application with brush.

Squeegee: Use to apply filling and/or conditioner to large flat areas of wood.

**Bleeding:** Some open grained woods, such as oak, can “bleed” excess oil finish from its pores until the oil has cured. Just rewipe the surface occasionally until the bleeding stops. If the spots of oil are left to dry on the surface, gently burnish off with steel wool.

**Uneven Color:** Some woods such as pine, fir, birch or maple may have a tendency to accept color unevenly. To help solve this problem, apply a wood conditioner prior to applying a stain and/or finish.

**New Wood Finishing Products** (no endorsement, but all are available at most Menards stores):

**3M Sanding Products:**

- All kinds of new sandpapers, sanding sponges, flexible sanding sheets in a wide variety of sizes and grits.

**WATCO:**

- Danish Oil: now in 9 colors
- Teak Oil: use on dense woods (teak, mahogany, rosewood), UV resistant
- Wipe On Poly: water resistant, can be applied over Danish oil or stain; available in gloss or satin
- Exterior Wood: UV, moisture and mildew resistant and reduces warping and swelling
- Lacquer: spray or brush on, dries in 30 minutes, fills pores of most wood types eliminating need for wood filler; available in gloss, semi-gloss and satin

For additional WATCO information go to [www.watco.net](http://www.watco.net) or [www.woodanswers.com](http://www.woodanswers.com)

**Formby's:**

- Tung Oil: high or low gloss
- Aerosol Stripper: use on small pieces or in heavily carved or hard-to-reach areas

For questions call Formby's Helpline at 1-800-290-1105 or check out [www.formbys.com](http://www.formbys.com)

**Varathane:**

- Stains: oil-based are easy to apply and provide consistent results; clean-up is more time consuming
  - o water-based are easy to clean up and dry quickly; may cause the grain to raise
  - o gel-based are designed for fiberglass, metal, wood and vertical surfaces
  - o available in 24 trial size packets
- Soya Oil: replacement for linseed oil; deeper penetration and clearer color
- Touch Up Markers: hide minor scratches and nicks
- Fill Sticks: fill nail holes, repair scratches and hide minor imperfections in wood; 24 colors
- Wood Filler: repairs defects in wood including cracks, scratches, gouges and nail holes before staining and/or finishing
- Wood Putty: fill nail holes and small defects after staining and finishing.
- Grain Filler: use on open grain wood (oak, mahogany, walnut) for a smoother finish.

For additional Varathane information go to [www.woodanswers.com](http://www.woodanswers.com)

**MINWAX:**

- Polycrylic Protective Finish: water-based topcoat that provides a hard, clear finish; dries quickly and cleans up with soap and water.
- Wipe-On Poly: apply with a soft, lint free cloth for polyurethane protection; good for furniture, trim and railings.
- Wood-Sheen: rubbing oil stain and finish.
- Blend-Fil Pencil: repairs shallow nicks and scratches; 18 colors

For additional MINWAX information go to [www.minwax.com](http://www.minwax.com) or call 1-800-523-9299