

Staining Guide

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What prep do I need to do to wood to stain? I always sand the wood (no matter what the species) with 320 grit sand paper before I stain. This assumes that I have sanded with higher grit sandpaper and this is just the final step of sanding. The more you sand, the better the stain will look (more even). Staining will accentuate the grain AND any scratches or imperfections that you did not remove during sanding.

Exactly how do you apply the stain? I use a small piece of paper towel and wear rubber gloves. I am cheap so I wipe off the gloves and use them multiple times for the same stain color. I fold the paper towel so I get a square edge and then dip it into the stain. I wipe the stain onto the piece and then repeat the process until I have covered the entire piece. Make sure you wipe off any extra. Do not try to get your final stain color in one coat. Sometimes the paper towel wears out and I refold or tear another small piece. On large pieces (like for a bed frame I stained), I use a piece of white painters rag from Home Depot. It provides an even coat if you wipe off any extra using a final wipe from end to end of the piece. I have even applied the stain with a small craft paint brush (from Michaels) when I needed to get into small places to stain. This is very time consuming and hard to control the way it looks. When I apply with the paper towel or rag, I wipe off any excess for a nice, even finish.

What is the overall process for staining and then applying finish? After the first coat of stain (assuming you will be applying more than one coat) and allow it to dry for at least 12 hours, I use the brown paper bag to sand the piece of wood. Then I apply the second coat of stain and allow it to dry 12 hours again. Then repeat the sanding with the paper bag. Lastly, I begin applying the finish. Whether I paint on the polyurethane or spray it on, I use the brown paper bag to sand between coats.

Do you use water based stains or oil based? All of my stains are oil based.

Where do you get your stains? I started purchasing basic brown family stains from Home Depot. Then I tried adding colors like Green, Blue, Orange, etc. from Sherwin Williams. I also really like the Pecan Gel Stain I picked up at Kelly-Moore. It is easy to use and produces a great color.

How many coats of stain do you apply? Some of the colors only need one coat while others look richer with multiple coats. Don't try to put extra on and hope it will get darker as it dries. It will not all absorb into the wood and it will get gummy on the surface.

How long do you wait between coats of stain? I always wait at least 12 hours even it is hot and dry where the piece is drying.

Have you ever made your own stain using the dyes? Yes I did to make Christmas Red and Green for some ornaments. I wanted the colors to be as dark and rich as possible. I only do this when I cannot find commercial stain since it is a bit more work and the stain isn't as "oily" and rich as the commercial stain.

Have you ever applied two different colors of stain on top of one another? Yes I have to create a blue / green color of deep water. I stained the piece blue (4 coats) and then added green as the final coat. It turned out well.

Does the stain color look the same on different species of wood? No it does not so I stain a piece of scrap wood from the project first and even apply polyurethane to see what I am going to get before I stain my project.