

THE DIPPING TECHNIQUE

An Alternative Finishing Technique

By

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INTRODUCTION:

A good finish should excite the senses. When touched with the finger tips, the finish should feel silky smooth. When viewed with the eyes, the finish should have depth and glow. A good finish can enhance a poorly cut piece and in turn, it can degrade a well cut piece.

One of the problems with finishing a scrolled piece is getting the finish in to cover the inside of the cuts. The technique I use I call dipping. This is a process of immersing the entire project piece into the finishing liquid and allowing the liquid to flow into all the holes and cuts.

This process can use stains, oil finishes, urethanes, and wipe-on polys with a low viscosity, (flows like water). Regular varnishes, gell stains, etc cannot be used unless they are thinned to about 50%.

PREPARING THE PROJECT FOR FINISH:

A good finish starts with a good prep of the project pieces. It starts after the cutting is complete, the tape is removed, and the pattern is removed. The prep consists of 3 steps.

1ST STEP:

The first step is to sand the piece/s with 150/180 grit sand paper to remove any and all residue left on the project pieces. Sand the front, back, and all edges. This will remove the gummy residue left by the tape and patterns. It will also remove most of the fuzzes left in the cuts. Vacuum the piece to remove the sand and residue dust. Remove the rest of the fuzzes and residue remaining in the cuts. After the cuts are clean, sand with 220 grit paper and vacuum.

2ND STEP:

The wood surface will still have some fibers that will rise up when the finish is applied. This will ruin the finish, making it feel rough. The second step will cause these fibers to appear.

To raise the fibers, wet the surface of the wood. Wet a rag with water and wring as much water from the rag as possible. You only want a damp rag. Wipe the surface of the wood with the damp rag. First wipe against the grain and then wipe with the grain. The surface will appear wet, but the holes will not. DO NOT press down on the rag. Set the piece/s aside and let them dry.

3RD STEP:

After each piece is dry, you should be able to see and feel the fibers. Sand each surface with 320 grit sand paper. First sand 45 degrees to the grain, then 45 degrees to the grain in the opposite direction, and finally with the grain. Sand until satisfied. Vacuum each piece when finished.

NOTE: If the project has several pieces, dry fit them and make any adjustments. Mark each piece for its location. **DO NOT ASSEMBLE!**

SET UP:

COMPONENTS:

The following is a list of components use for the dipping process:

- Wax paper
- Foil pans, 9 x 12, 3 ea.
- Paper towels
- Drain rack, baking cooling rack
- Drying rack, small clothes drying rack, portable
- Ornament hooks, large size
- Air source, air compressor, etc
- Lint free cotton cloths, 5x5, and ½ a white sock
- Rubber gloves
- Apron
- Safety glasses
- Zip lock bags, quart or gallon
- Finish, low viscosity

LAYOUT:

- Select a smooth flat well lit surface.
- Cover the surface with at least 2 rows of wax paper. The paper will add an extra layer of protection.
- Line the foil pans next to each other on top of the wax paper. The left pan is the dip pan. The middle pan is the drain pan. The right pan is the wipe pan.
- Place 3 + layers of paper towel into the bottom of the middle pan. Place a couple of paper towel layers in the bottom of the wipe pan (right pan).
- Place the drain rack into the drain pan (middle pan).
- Fold 2 or 3 5x5 cloths in 3rds along one length. Leave the other length as is.
- Air source. If air compressor, set pressure to a maximum of 40 psi.
- Setup drying rack and hang ornament hooks
- Put on apron, safety glasses, and rubber gloves.
- Shake the finish well to make sure it is well mixed.
- Open the finish can and pour it into your selected zip lock bag. Do not fill the bag more than ¼ full. You do not need a large amount of finish to dip the project pieces.

DIPPING PROCESS:

Dipping is the process of immersing the entire project piece into the finish. The finish will coat all surfaces including all holes and cuts. The process can be used for stains, oil finishes, wipe-on urethanes, or any low viscous fluid. This process consists of 4 steps.

DIP:

Open the zip-locked bag filled with finish. Insert a project piece into the bag. Close the zip-lock and while holding the top of the bag, lay it flat in the 1st pan. The project piece should be completely immersed in the finish. Turn the bag over and lay it flat in the pan to ensure complete coverage.

NOTE: Beware of the sharp corners on the project piece as they will puncture the bag.

In cold weather, place the finish bag into a pan of warm water. The water will keep the finish warm and improve its flow.

DRAIN:

Open the finish bag and remove the project piece. Lay the piece on the drain rack in the middle pan. Allow the piece to drain for a few minutes. The time depends upon the outside air temp and one's experience. If not sure, error on the side of less time.

With the piece still on the drain rack, blow air into the holes with an air source. If using an air compressor, make sure the maximum pressure is 40 psi. If using another air pressure source, do not operate at full force. Too much air pressure will cause the finish to splatter.

If you do not have an air pressure source, wipe the top side of the piece and gently tap the piece on a paper towel or gently blow air thru the holes from your mouth. Make sure you have your safety glasses on.

WIPE:

Wiping the piece involves removing the excess finish from all exposed surfaces. Move the piece from the drain rack to the third pan. The paper towels will absorb most of the excess finish on the bottom of the piece. With one of the preformed cloths, wipe the excess finish from the top and edges of the piece.

Put a used ½ sock on the left hand over the glove. Turn the piece over and put it on the left hand. Wipe the top and bottom of the piece with the cloth. Inspect both sides of the piece for weepage around the holes. Wipe as needed.

DRY:

Insert an ornament hook into one of the holes in the piece. Hang the piece on the drying rack.

After the piece has been on the drying rack for 20 to 30 minutes, remove the piece from the drying rack and inspect for weepage around the holes. If weepage marks are visible, wipe the area with the same cloth used to wipe the piece before. There should still be enough finish on the cloth to remove the mark.

Re-hang the piece/s and allow them to dry for 24 hours. If this was a stain coat, repeat the dipping process for the finish material. If more finish coats are desired, continue with the Final Coat procedure.

CLEAN-UP: Pour the unused finish back into its can. Fold the used paper towels and place them in the used finish bag. Wipe down the pans and put the towels and cloths into the bag. Roll up the bag and close the zip lock. Put the bag into a disposable container.

FINAL COATS:

After the project pieces are dry, they are ready for more coats of finish. The number of coats depends upon you. Are you satisfied with what you have? Does the present finish pass the eye-touch test? To add more coats only takes 15 to 20 minutes per coat with a lot less mess and components.

NOTE: If the project consists of more than one piece, apply 2 or 3 finish coats before assembly. Focus on the sides of the pieces that will be on the inside. Prior to assembly, carefully sand the glue edges with 150 grit sand paper. This will remove the finish at the joints and allow for a better glue joint. After assembly, apply number of coats desired. Usually 3 or 4 more.

EQUIPMENT:

- Drying rack and ornament hooks
- Rubber gloves
- Wipe-on finish
- Lint free cloths, 5x5

PREP:

Lightly sand each piece with 600 grit sand paper or brown paper sack until smooth. If there are areas that need more sanding, use 400 grit paper. Pay close attention to the edges of the piece. It is very easy to over-sand them and remove their finish. Inspect all the holes for foreign material and remove it. Vacuum the pieces to remove all sand dust. Use a tac cloth for a final wipe down.

APPLICATION:

- Fold a piece of the lint free cloth into about a 2x2 pad.
- Mix up the finish by shaking it.
- Open the finish can and hold the cloth pad over the opening. Wet the pad with the finish.
- Wipe the finish on the project piece. You may have to re-wet the pad several times until the piece is covered.
 - o If a single piece, apply the finish to only one side and 2 edges.
 - o If assembled, apply to either the inside or the outside of the piece.
- If a single piece, hang the piece on the drying rack.
- Close the finish can and put the cloth into a sealed jar. The pad can be re-used many times.

NOTE: If more coats are desired, repeat the prep and application steps above.

WAX:

The final step to the finishing process is to apply a coat of paste wax to all exterior surfaces. The wax provides protection to the finish and polishes the surface. I use a finishing paste wax for dark colored surfaces made by Minwax. Johnson floor paste wax will also work.

APPLICATOR:

The applicator is a ball made from a piece of cotton cloth and a glob of wax. Take a piece of about 6X6 cotton cloth and put a glob of wax in the middle of it. Then gather up the corners of the cloth and tie them with a piece of twine close to the glob of wax. The final result is a ball of wax covered by a piece of cloth. When the ball is kneaded, the wax will penetrate the cloth.

PREP:

Do not prep or wax until the existing finish on the project is completely dry. I allow the piece to dry for a minimum of 72 hours. Check your finishing instructions.

To prep the project for waxing, lightly rub the external surfaces with a brown paper pad. The paper should remove any roughness and enhance the finishes glow. If you need heavier sanding, use 600 grit sand paper.

APPLICATION:

Knead the wax applicator ball to bring fresh wax to the surface. Lightly rub the wax ball over the entire exterior surfaces. The area where the wax is applied will dull. This will indicate the coverage.

BUFF:

Buffing removes the excess wax and polishes the surface. Buff with a clean cotton rag folded into a small square or use an old sock.

Allow the wax to set for about 10 to 15 minutes before you start to buff. Rub the waxed surface with the buffing cloth until the surface is shinny.

The project is now complete.

CONCLUSION;

The finish and the care that you put on your project helps to enhance your work. What I have described is only one of many techniques. If you are searching for a finishing technique or to improve your technique, I hope that maybe I have helped you in your search.