

Wiping Varnish – What is it?

Wiping varnish is simply any brand of oil-based alkyd (regular) varnish or oil-based polyurethane varnish in any sheen (gloss or satin) thinned about half with mineral spirits (paint thinner).

Rules for Application

- Wipe or brush on the wood and
- Wipe off all the excess; or
- Brush off some or most of the excess using a “dry” brush; or
- Leave all the excess (only on flat, horizontal surfaces).
- Allow to dry overnight or at least 6 hours in a warm room, garage or shop.
- Sand each dried coat lightly with #320- or #400-grit sandpaper to remove dust nibs before applying the next coat.
- Three or four coats are usually minimum for good results.

When to Use

On any object – furniture, trim, cabinets – or even floors when you want a

protective and durable finish that is easy to apply and produces almost perfect results.

Compatibility

Can be used over any stain or finish, as long as it is dry, clean and dull. Also, any finish can be applied over wiping varnish as long as it is dry, clean and dull. If you spray lacquer, however, spray light coats because the lacquer thinner could cause the varnish to blister.

Advantages

- Very easy to apply.
- Very protective and durable after several coats.
- Easy to get an almost flawless result.
- Adds warmth to dark and dark-stained woods.

Disadvantages

- Takes many more coats to achieve the same thickness and protection as fewer coats of brushed-on alkyd or polyurethane varnish.

- Adds a noticeable yellow/orange coloring to light-colored woods.
- Can result in streaking when using a satin wiping varnish.

Common Application Problems

- Dust nibs, especially if the finish room is dusty.
- Runs on vertical surfaces if most of the excess isn't wiped or brushed off.

Make your Own

- One part gloss, oil-based polyurethane varnish; one part mineral spirits (paint thinner).

Variations

- Higher percentage of polyurethane varnish to achieve a faster build.
- Higher percentage of mineral spirits to achieve a longer working time and better leveling.
- Substitute any other oil-based varnish.

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