

Furniture Refinishing - Removing Paint and Varnish

Rules, Tips and Paraphernalia

WHAT YOU SHOULD HAVE ON HAND TO GET STARTED:

Chemical stripper or a Heat Gun
Glass or metal bowl (not aluminum)
Cheapo Applicator Brush
Metal Scrapper
Scrub Brush with stiff bristles
Stiff Tooth Brush
Rubber Gloves
Catch surface with a flat edge (not aluminum)
Synthetic scrubbie pad
Lacquer Thinner or Mineral Spirits (Lacquer Thinner works 10 times better)
Tarp, plastic sheet or cardboard as a surface protector
Respirator (not a dust mask) or an electric fan with fresh air source
Garbage Can with a disposal plastic garbage pail bag
Safety Glasses

RULES:

RULE #1 – Proper ventilation, covered skin and protective eyewear
RULE #2 – Apply chemical stripper in a thick layer, in one direction only, similar to icing a cake
RULE #3 – Once applied leave it alone. It forms an air-tight bond enhancing its chemical actions
RULE #4 – Follow the manufacturers recommendation for reaction time and ambient air temperature
RULE #5 – The top coat should come off easy. Do not scrap or force removal
RULE #6 – Reapply a second and third coat, if needed
RULE #7 – For stubborn or on raised, carved or curved areas use a stiff bristled scrub brush
RULE #8 – To avoid resistance to staining or clear coating rinse project well with Lacquer Thinner
RULE #9 - Let DRY FOR 7-10 DAYS before the next step - SANDING

TIPS:

Splashes happen, if chemical stripper comes in contact with any body surface immediately flush with tap water.

It's best to work outdoors. If this is not an option use a fan forcing vapors away from you through an open window. If indoors use a quality respirator approved for vapors. DUST MASKS DO NOT QUALIFY!!

A dull metal or plastic scrapper works best and prevents accidently gouging surfaces.

I do not recommend some of the new strippers that can be rinsed in water. Water and wood don't do well together. Mineral spirits and lacquer thinners evaporate almost immediately and do not penetrate deep into the wood. Lacquer thinner works 10 times faster than mineral spirits.

Use throw away brushes for applying chemical strippers.

Be aware while Heat Guns are more eco-friendly but they are slow and tedious on flat surfaces and extremely difficult to use on raised, carved and rounded surfaces.

Check your local laws for proper waste disposal.

Some level of sanding will be required after stripping. Sanding is done in steps and most finishers sand to 180 or 220 GRIT.

Sand paper is measured in grits.

40-80 grit is COARSE (only used to level an uneven surface or remove old finishes)

120-180 grit is MEDIUM (start here with new wood)

220-300 grit is FINE (I typically finish my sanding with a 220 grit)

Above #400 grit is EXTRA FINE (High grits like these are used for polishing)

My next video will cover sanding tips and techniques. If you will be staining your wood project be sure to check out my YouTube video:

THE PERFECT STAIN APPLICATION TECHNIQUE.

Finishing takes time and patience but it's what people notice. The reality is if they don't notice the finish you've scored. A nice finishing job enhances the natural beauty of the surface below without drawing attention to itself.

Please come back to my YouTube Channel and let me know how your project turned out! Oh, and while you're there subscribe as my plan is to release a series of posts and videos on all aspects of finishing and refinishing over the winter. You'll be notified as they are released.