

How to Sand Wood Efficiently Tips & Techniques

Rules, Tips and Paraphernalia

WHAT YOU SHOULD HAVE ON HAND TO GET STARTED:

Sand Paper - assess the condition of your project and pick the appropriate papers. All projects will need a minimum of 120 grit, 180 grit and 220 grit

- UNEVEN SURFACES, HIGH SPOTS - Start with 80 grit
- DEEP SCRATCHES, GOUGES - Start at or move to 100 grit
- WHEN ABOVE CONDITIONS CORRECTED, GENERAL SANDING – 120 grit
- ALWAYS FOLLOW WITH – 180 grit
- FOR PENETRATING OIL FINISHES – continue to 220 grit move to 320 grit and finish at 400
- AFTER STAIN OR POLYURETHANE – 220 grit
- BETWEEN COATS OF STAIN OR POLYURETHANE – 200 grit

Tack Cloth – available at hardware stores, home centers, or online

Sanding Block

Dust Mask

RULES:

RULE #1: SANDING HAPPENS IN STEPS - Start with the appropriate grit for the condition of your project and finish with the appropriate grit (see above) continue without skipping any grit

RULE #2: LET THE SANDPAPER DO THE WORK – Each step in the process easier with less pressure

RULE #3: SAND WITH THE GRAIN – with few exceptions always follow the grain direction

RULE #4: HAND SANDING – Use a sanding block when possible

RULE #5: MECHANICAL SANDING – Sand with the grain at 1 inch per second or slower

RULE #6: DUST REMOVAL – Clear dust with a vacuum and then tack cloth to remove dust

TIPS:

TIPS: Sand to 180 before staining. Sand with 220 after final stain. Sand with 220 between coats of stain and polyurethane. Sand to 400 when using wiping oils as your finish coat.

TIP: When using polyurethane let it dry overnight before re-coating. The surface should be dry so you can see and rub the surface looking or feeling for any minor imperfections. If there are imperfections NOW is the time to correct them. It doesn't make sense to put the next coat over a bad layer and then think about necessary steps for correction.

TIP: Use mechanical sanders to aid in repair work. Repair projects where 80-100 grit sandpaper is used, is best done with a mechanical sander. While this can be done by hand sanding it does require energy. You have to decide if the benefit/cost ratio is evident for your project and future projects.

TIP: Sandpaper typically comes in 9X11" sheets or 3.67X9" strips. The largest section for effective hand sanding would be folded into quarter sheets for sheet paper or in half for strip paper.

TIP: Moving too fast with mechanical sanders might create unwanted scratches. The general rule for mechanical sanders is move no faster than ONE INCH PER SECOND

TIP: Mechanical sanding should always be finished with a light hand sanding in the direction of the grain. When you sand wood mechanically it tends to leave squiggles and swirls. A light hand sanding in the direction with the grain removes them.

TIP: The most time and energy can be saved by choosing THE RIGHT GRIT, IN THE RIGHT SEQUENCE, FOR THE RIGHT CONDITION

TIP: KEEP YOUR BRUSHES CLEAN - Dust nibs are common to many DIYer's. Nibs happen because of airborne particles but they are also introduced by contaminated brushes or coatings. Use tack cloth to wipe down the outside (and inspect the inside) of stain and clear coat cans as they should be dust free as well.

TIP: Dust nibs after your final coat are best removed by using a brown paper bag folded flat. The bag is coarse enough to remove any high spots without scratching the surface and changing the finishes sheen.

IMPORTANT CAVEAT: SANDING PLYWOOD

Plywood is made from layers of wood and wood byproducts with a very thin layer of quality wood veneer on top. While there are many advantages to plywood the major drawback is the potential to cut through the top veneer layer. Extra caution is required when sanding plywoods.

Mechanical sanders and low grit sand paper tear through wood quickly. When sanding it is best to use minimal pressure. Too much pressure will create uneven surface areas and create deeper scratches.

The next step is a clear finish or stain. Be sure to read on the appropriate blog or watch on my YouTube Channel

[*"Refinishing Furniture Step #3 - Wood Stain Application Tips and Techniques"*](#)

[*"Refinishing Furniture Step #4 - Bubble-Free Polyurethane Application Technique"*](#)

Please come back here or to my YouTube Channel and let me know how your project turned out! If you haven't already 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.

If you have questions just ask, I ALWAYS respond!

I'll be waiting to hear . . .
best paul