

How To Apply Tung Oil Properly – Tips and Techniques

Rules, Tips and Paraphernalia

WHAT YOU SHOULD HAVE ON HAND TO GET STARTED:

An area with good lighting

Sand Paper

For a new wood project - *120 grit, 180 grit, 220 grit, 320 grit and 400 grit papers*

For a re-finishing project - *For high spots, old paint or gouges I would add an 80 grit to the above five*

Lint free cotton rags or 5-6 foam brushes

Pure or Pure Polymerized Tung Oil

One of the following thinning agents - *Mineral Spirits, Paint Thinner, Turpentine, Naphtha or Citrus Thinners*

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

A suitable storage container - *something with an air tight lid so you can save unused oil for next application*

Patience and determination to get the job done right

RULES:

RULE #1 – Not all tung oil is really tung oil. Buy only pure or polymerized pure tung oil

RULE #2 – Sand up to 300-400 grit to avoid sanding scratch marks

RULE #3 – Remove all dust to assure open pores (vacuum, tack cloth and thinner wipe down between every coat)

RULE #4 – Thin 30% oil/70% thinner first coat; 40%oil/60% thinner second coat; 55%oil/45% thinner third coat; 75%oil/25% thinner fourth coat; 100% oil fifth and subsequent coats

RULE #5 – Flood the surface with oil mixture and keep flooded for 30 minutes

RULE #6 – Let dry overnight with polymerized tung oil or a few days for pure tung oil

RULE #7 – Be sure oil has dried before reapplication (Test: Sanding will produce a fine white sanding dust <dried oil>).

RULE #8 – Repeat steps above and reapply appropriately thinned oil

RULE #9 – Do not sand after final coat.

TIPS:

Don't fret over bubbles on surface. They will be wiped away.

Polymerized tung oil has been super-heated which enhances drying time. It doesn't change viscosity so it still needs to be thinned for maximum depth of absorption.

Oils are penetrating finishes and tend to accentuate wood imperfections including sanding scratches. Sand to at least 300 grit and best between 300-400 grit to avoid scratch marks.

Dust clogs the woods pores and prevents oil absorption. 300-400 grit sandpapers produce ultra-fine sanding dust. Extra effort is needed to clear pores.

Many products labeled tung oil are not or are highly modified. Buy only PURE or PURE POLYMERIZED tung oils.

Five coats are normal. Some woodworkers will go into the teens with coatings. The more coats creates a higher sheen and affords more protection.

Do not dispose of extra tung oil. If you should need to repair it can be done easily by a light sanding and area application.

With proper care this finish will last a lifetime.

Tung oil is appropriate for both indoor and outdoor usage. It is water, mildew and UV resistant and has been used on wooden boats for centuries.

The Great Debate: Oil-based polyurethane vs Water-based polyurethane. Both are suspension materials that evaporate and leave the coating resins. Both apply the same but require different brushes to apply.

Sand before applying your first coat of polyurethane. Sanding is done in steps and most finishers do the final sanding at 180 to 220 GRIT.

220 grit sand paper is recommended for light sanding in between coats.

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 on surface coatings like lacquer and polyurethane and 300-400 on penetrating oil finishes)

400 is ultra fine

600 and above are polishing papers

Every coat is the same procedure.

Tack cloth is an inexpensive dust remover that can be purchased at any home center, paint store or hardware store. It is just a piece of cheese cloth with a slightly sticky additive to pick up sanding dust and particles.

I am happy to answer woodworking questions but it's best done on one of my YouTube Video Comment Sections as I check those daily. My website is designed only as an additional YouTube Resource.