

Kurt's clinic

Kurt Hertzog answers some readers' questions

Sanding sealant options

Question: I wondered if you could advise me on the applications for the two different types of sanding sealant, namely cellulose and acrylic. Are there different woods that finish better with acrylic rather than cellulose? Also, which type of finishing materials are most suitable with either sealant, i.e. wax, oil or whatever? Are there any guidelines available so that the very amateur turner like me can achieve the best finish on a project?



My finishing needs are relatively simple. A gloss, a matted back finish, and a tough-as-nails finish for pens and the like. CA glue, lacquer, and the occasional wipe-on poly do everything I need

Answer: You've covered quite some ground here with your questions. I'm a very limited sanding sealer user. I use it on occasion to make finish cuts on woods that are causing me problems with tear-out. An application of a 50/50 thinned sanding sealer is one method that can help tame the unruly grain enough for a clean finish cut. The other use I have for sanding sealer is to prevent stains or finishes from penetrating unevenly into woods, whether turned or flat work. End grain will suck up stains and finishes far more readily than face grain, causing areas that don't match the rest of the project in colour or intensity. Sanding sealer



One of the most important things you can do for safety is to have the proper PPE always available – especially the correct (still active and effective) breathing filter packs for particular chemicals being used



Whether regular spray pressure, HVLP, or rattle can, I find that lacquer is easily learned and executed. Done well, it is a durable and good-looking finish

application only to the end grain area helps equalise the face-grain to end-grain absorption. I always use a 50/50 mix of sealer to thinner when I need it. I don't use it universally as a standard prep coat for other finishes, which seems to be part of your question. As far as cellulose versus acrylic... I use cellulose exclusively. I only use the one brand and always thinned down so I can't give any advice on why acrylic might be better, other than perhaps water clean-up of application brushes. My application is via a paper towel or a foam brush, which is trashed afterwards when safely cured.



A simple example of my working containers for solvents used in the shop, numbered one to six, the weakest being water then through to my lacquer thinner. Each is in a marked polyethylene chemical bottle with tight-fit cap

As for guidelines on finishing, that is an art and science unto itself. When you've progressed beyond the 'rub and buff' shellac and wax stuff, there are myriad available finishes and techniques. Based on your end use or customer needs, take your cues from the available writings of the many expert pro turners. Also, be certain to look into the finishing experts from the flat work world. My favourite experts on wood finishing are Michael Dresdner, Jeff Jewitt, Teri Masaschi, and Bob Flexner, to name a few. My advice to you as you progress down your finishing path is to select one finish and master it – perhaps a couple at most. Whether you use sanding sealer underneath is your choice. I'm not sure I see any advantage other than as noted above. Forever experimenting with the many and varied finishes

available may be fun, but I'm more for getting the one or two that do what I need and getting as proficient as possible with them. The more you minimise variation, the faster, more efficient, and more uniform (read higher quality) your finishing will be. Other than the occasional wipe-on poly for a cut back to a low-gloss matte, my two go-to finishes are CA and spray-on lacquer. With those two and that occasional poly being a third, I can accomplish all that I need. There may be the rare occasion when I dabble with some other finish but it is on a very special needs basis. You can choose whatever finish(es) suits you but I think brushing up with the experts I've suggested and not trying to master too many different finishes will serve you well.

Storing hazardous products

Question: I'm concerned about the storage of finishing products and cleaning chemicals in my shop. Can you offer suggestions on the best way to safely deal with all of these necessary but potentially hazardous products?

Answer: Without having the quite expensive chemical storage cabinets and air-tight, fire-safe rag disposal containers usually found in industry, there are many things you can do to help be safe in your shop. Store any chemical supplies safely off the floor in an area out of harm's way from denting, dinging, heat, untrained hands, people without proper PPE, etc. Keep all containers tightly sealed and only decant usable quantities from any large containers into transfer containers of appropriate size. Be certain to use transfer containers of proper material for the chemicals to be held. For nearly everything you might use, polyethylene chemical bottles with fitting caps will be appropriate. These are available at machine tool suppliers, local or internet, and most discount auto supply-type retailers. I also have bought new, empty

pint and quart metal paint cans and lids from my local professional paint supplier for decanting large quantity chemical containers into more convenient sizes. By keeping the large quantities secure and sealed, these smaller containers can be used where needed and reloaded as required. With sealing caps, you can control odours and evaporation. Be certain to clearly mark the transfer containers with the contents. You and all others who might come in contact with these need to know what is contained for the safe handling and use of proper PPE. Inside a poly bottle or an unmarked can, many chemicals will look the same and are easily confused unless very clearly marked. Putting a date on the transfer container isn't a bad idea either. Do not dispose of any empty containers, used application rags or brushes, clean-up items, or any potential

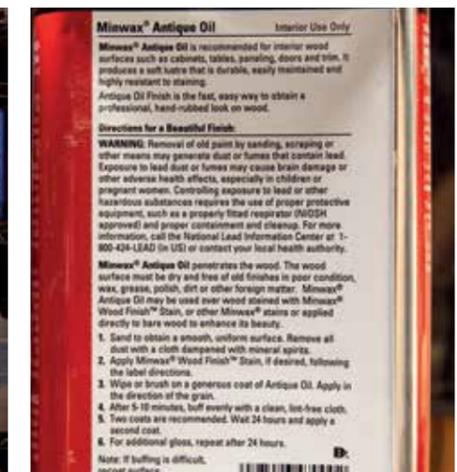
spontaneously combustible items without first letting them fully air cure, spread out safely on a non-combustible surface clear of other combustible items. I spread my application rags and brushes in the middle of my shop's concrete floor, away from everything flammable, until they have fully cured and hardened. Once fully cured, they are safe to be disposed of properly. The most important bit of advice I can offer is to read, understand, and follow all the manufacturer's safe handling, storage, and use instructions. Use the PPE suggested for your health safety and that of others who may be in the area. In my shop, even with all of the precautions I follow, I keep several fully-sized and up-to-date fire extinguishers of the proper type. Not expensive and worth any price should you need them for any incidents, whether involving chemicals or equipment.



A fire extinguisher or two, of the proper type and current charge, is a low cost, very worthwhile addition to any area with wood, wood dust, and chemicals



In my shop, all of my chemicals except for the working transfer containers, are stored in one place. They are tightly capped, stored in the original containers, and off the floor



The most valuable information about any chemical or finish is on the side of the container. Best use methods, proper ppe, and emergency first aid instructions are there

Send your questions to Kurt's email: kurt@kurthertzog.com