

Volume 4

DECORATIVE FINISHES

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

DO IT YOURSELF SERIES



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STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES

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DECORATIVE FINISHES

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General Decorative Finishing Tips:

Always start with a damp tool. (sponge, rag, etc.)

Be sure to blot your tool every time you load it.

Use paint sparingly, a little goes a long way.

Use random motions to distribute the paint in a big area when the tool is saturated, and then fill in the area.

Continue until the tool is almost dry.

Pre-wet the wall surface before doing a subtractive finish.

Turn on a humidifier and block out direct sunlight.

If glaze is still drying too fast, try adding a bit of water or extender. You may also try working in smaller sections.

Decorative Finishing

Decorative finishing is an enduring art form because of the unique, dramatic and visually stunning looks that can be created with very easy application techniques. This guide provides you with an introduction to the most popular decorative finishes.

Detailed decorating books with more elaborate techniques are available for the advanced decorator.

Decorative Finishing Basics

Here are the main ingredients required to create a successful decorative finish:

- Patience and creativity
- Application materials – more on this with each finish
- Usually a base coat of paint
- Usually 1 – 2 glaze coat(s)
- Masking and preparation materials
- A protective finish coat of varnish depending on the application.

Color adjustments can be made with universal tinting colorants. Check the supplies list for each finish to determine your requirements. Most finishes require glaze coats, which can be prepared by you.

What's a Glaze?

Glazes are an ingredient for creating various special colored wash or transparent finishes over a base coat. Glazes can be either water or oil based and are usually created from a home blended recipe although there are some commercial glaze bases available.

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Mixing a Glaze Coat:

Mix enough glaze to complete your whole project. The amount of glaze required is generally about half the amount of paint required for the base coat. Keep the mixed glaze covered.

Test the transparency of your glaze by painting over newsprint or use a paint stick. You should still be able to read the print. Test the consistency on a vertical surface. The glaze should not drip down the wall and should be able to hold the shape of a brush stroke.

Decorative Finishing Basics

Paint Types

Oil (alkyd) base paints are very good choices for decorative painting because of their slow dry time. This is especially advantageous for novice painters as it will allow them more time to work the glaze coat. The major disadvantages of oil-base paints are the odor associated with them and that solvent must be used for clean up.

Latex (water) base paints dry much faster, and when painting an entire room it can often feel like a race to manipulate the glaze coat before it sets up. However, it has less odor than oil base paint, the re-coat time is faster, and clean up is much easier.

Glaze Recipes

The following oil or water base glaze recipes offer you a basic starting point which can be modified to suit your particular project. The idea is to blend a translucent white or colored glaze or wash that adds color and effect but allows the base coat to show through.

Oil Base Glaze Recipe

1 part oil paint – low gloss
4 – 5 parts flat urethane
1 part mineral spirits

Water Base Glaze Recipe

1 part latex paint – low gloss
4 – 5 parts acrylic varnish
1 part water

You can add or subtract the glaze coat. Additive techniques are great for high traffic areas or walls in poor condition. They can be done easily by one person, but usually require more than 1 color to get a finished look. Additive techniques use very little paint. Subtractive methods generally have a softer appearance, but usually need more than one person in order to manipulate the glaze before it dries.

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Checklist for Woodgraining:

- graining base coat
- wiping stain
- urethane topcoat – to protect the surface
- graining tool
- foam brush
- soft bristle brush
- sandpaper
- masking tape
- tack rag

Tips:

Color is the heart of decorative painting. The key lies in the contrast between the basecoat and topcoat. Tone-on-tone combinations are more subtle than more dramatic color combinations and more forgiving in application.

Woodgraining

Apply the Base Coat

Paint the surface to be wood-grained with your base coat. When brushing or rolling be sure to apply in the same direction as the intended wood grain finish. If brushed opposite the wood grain, the brush marks will show through. Allow the base to thoroughly dry (12-24 hours).

Apply First Coat of Stain

After the base has dried, lightly sand in the direction of the grain and wipe the surface clean with a rag dampened with mineral spirits to ensure you have a smooth and dust free surface.

Apply wiping stain very lightly on your project using a foam brush. Do not dip the brush into the stain like you would to paint but rather just slightly touch the tip in the stain. The stain is rich in pigment and quite thick; a little goes a long way and too much will make it more difficult to achieve a nice finish. Keep it light. This coat will be your undercoat so shade or blend to your desired background color. Keep it smooth, not blotchy or with any heavy deposits of stain. Do not be concerned about light streaks or fine lines, but do not allow lap marks. Remember: brush in the direction of the grain. Allow this coat to dry thoroughly (about 12 hours).

Apply Second Coat of Stain (tooled coat)

Apply the second coat of stain with the foam brush just as before, except now you spread the stain over one section at a time. Use the graining tool on each section before going on to the next.

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Tips:

Practice will allow you to get a feel for the graining tool. Employ various wrist motions and use different combinations of motions to create your pattern. If the design isn't quite right, redistribute the stain with your foam brush and try again.

Use a protective finish coat:

Once the final coat is dry – about 12 hours under normal conditions – apply one or two coats of clear urethane to protect your finish. If you want to remove the finish at a later date, simply strip the finish with paint remover.

Woodgraining cont.

The graining tool is a simple device that allows the user to rearrange the stain into patterns that resemble wood grain. It is relatively simple to use. Practice and patience with the tool will make the process easier.

To Use the Graining Tool:

Hold it by its handle and place your index finger directly on the base of the head (where the handle and curved portion of the tool meet). To use the tool, press the face of the tool firmly against the surface of your project and slide it along in a straight smooth motion. By rocking the tool you can alter the pattern to create knots and open grains. Vein grain and quarter-sawn grains can be created by using notches on the top and bottom of the tool.

Two Basic Secrets of the Tool Are:

1. Maintain a good, constant pressure. For the tool to work it must have good consistent contact with the surface. Where the tool does not touch firmly it cannot rearrange the stain.
2. Constant motion. You can go slow or you can go fast but you cannot stop. You must move the tool across the surface in a smooth, uninterrupted motion.

When your pattern is suitable, let the stain dry for 15-20 minutes then gently brush the entire surface with a soft dry brush. This blends your effect and creates an even more natural look to simulate your wood finish.

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Checklist for Frottage:

- base coat
- glaze coat
- brush for edges
- roller
- tray
- thin plastic sheeting about 2" (50mm) larger than the wall
- disposable gloves

Tips:

When applying this technique to all the walls in a room, work on walls that are opposite each other rather than adjacent. Otherwise, plastic from the second wall may stick to the wet paint on the first wall.

Frottage (a.k.a. Smooshing)

A quick and easy way to create a leather-like finish.

Getting Started

Paint walls with base coat and allow to dry overnight. Mix glaze as per the instructions at the beginning of this guide. Oil-based paint dries slower and may be easier to use with this technique. Always mix enough glaze to do the entire room. It is very difficult to mix the exact same glaze color a second time.

Unfold poly before glazing the wall. Utility weight poly is very thin and produces the best result. Poly is available in rolls when doing large surfaces. Open your poly sheet and ball it up to crinkle it and create folds.

Apply the Finish

Apply glaze quickly to the wall. If you think it will take more than 15-20 minutes to apply glaze to an entire wall then do it in sections. Following quickly, press poly sheeting on the wall. Pressing the plastic onto the wet glaze will adhere it to the wall. Using your hands, smooth the plastic against the wall. It should not require more than about 5 minutes to frottage the entire section. Carefully remove and discard plastic. Long lines can be evened out at this point with more poly. Repeat on all walls to be frottaged, using a new piece of poly each time.

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Checklist for Color Washing:

- base coat
- glaze coat
- brush for trim
- roller
- tray
- cotton rags
- bucket of water or thinner for cleaning rags
- disposable gloves

Tips:

Oil-based glaze allows more open time to work the finish, making blending easier. When using oil-based finishes, substitute thinners for water.

Color Washing

Apply base coat and let dry. Mix your glaze as per the instructions at the beginning of this guide. Gather a damp, lint free rag in your hand, making sure the ends are tucked up in your palm. Dip the rag in glaze and start applying on the wall in small circular motions. Then blend the edges of the circles into each other (similar to polishing furniture). Re-wet rag with glaze as required. Step back frequently and examine your work to ensure the overall effect is even. For even more texture, apply a second glaze coat in a different shade in the same way.

To avoid your final finish from being too subtle, use a darker glaze than normal. Use very little glaze on your rag at a time. Blot on newspaper or paper towel if necessary. The more you rub the finish, the lighter the shade will be.

Ragging Off

A quick way to create a refined, sophisticated finish.

This technique is easier with two people. One to apply the glaze and one to remove it.

Apply base coat and let dry. Mix your glaze. With a brush or roller, the first person applies a thin layer of glaze on the wall. The second person dips a rag in water or thinner, (depending on the type of paint you are using) wrings thoroughly and bunches the rag so there are as many ridges as possible. Blot the rag on paper or a paper towel prior to using the rag on the wall. Touch the surface to remove the glaze.

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Checklist for Ragging:

- base coat
- glaze coat, 1 or 2 colors
- brush for trim
- roller
- tray
- cotton rags
- bucket of water or thinner for cleaning rags
- disposable gloves

Tips:

When checking your surface, you shouldn't be able to count the number of times the sponge has marked the surface.

Ragging Off cont.

To ensure a random pattern, twist your wrist and re-arrange the rag often as you are removing glaze. Be sure to keep a random edge to avoid "bands" of color. Step back from the wall frequently to ensure even coverage. When the rag becomes saturated, rinse in your bucket and wring out. You can tell the rag is saturated when it begins applying glaze instead of removing it.

Do not switch jobs. Application and removal of the glaze will differ from person to person and changing jobs may leave noticeable differences in texture. Avoid going back over previously finished areas as this will remove too much glaze and leave the reworked section much lighter than the surrounding area.

Sponging On

One of the easiest ways to create a granite-like faux finish.

Paint on base coat and allow to dry. Mix glaze. Rinse sponge thoroughly in water to soften, then wring well. The final sponge layer will be the most dominant color so start with the glaze color you want to show the least. i.e. usually a darker color to a lighter color.

Apply the Finish

Sponge surface, from top to bottom in 2 foot (60 cm) vertical strips. Be sure to keep a random edge to avoid "bands" of color. Step back from the wall frequently to ensure even coverage. Allow glaze to dry. Clean tools and refill bucket with clean water.

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Tips:

More than four colors is not recommended as it can appear blotchy. A very subtle effect with extra depth can be achieved with multiple tones of the same color.

Checklist for Dimensional Stenciling:

- interior latex wall paint, the same color as the wall
- drywall compound
- acrylic polyurethane varnish
- stencil of choice
- stencil adhesive
- spackle knife
- small disposable mixing container
- drop cloth

Sponging On cont.

Apply the next glaze color in the same manner as the first, but apply this coat in 2 foot (60 cm) horizontal strips. This will also help minimize banding. Allow glaze to dry. Clean tools and refill bucket.

The most appealing effects allow the base coat to show through the sponge coats. If the effect has too much contrast, the final effect can be toned down with a thin, transparent coat of the lighter color or white.

Dimensional Stenciling

Add dimension to a simple stencil, quickly and easily.

Getting Started

In the mixing container, combine drywall compound, wall paint, and polyurethane varnish 6:2:1 to make texture paint mixture. The consistency should be like a thick milkshake.

Apply the Finish

Using stencil adhesive, apply the stencil to the wall. Apply the texture paint with a spackle knife. Carefully lift the stencil from the wall. Be careful not to disturb the relief.

Read all labels to be sure that products are compatible before mixing. The mixture is tintable by adding colored paint. While random pattern stencils are easier, continuous borders can be achieved with careful use of the registration marks on the stencils.

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