

Cabinet Renewal – Paint Finishes

Level of Difficulty – 3

Do you have cabinets that are stained wood? If you want to make a big change to your kitchen or bathroom, consider painting the cabinets so that they look different than all of the other homes in your neighborhood! Cabinets that are prepared and painted properly give your kitchen a rich, custom appearance as well as a durable, cleanable finish.

There are two ways to approach painting oak, or any open grain wood cabinets. You can either choose to hide the grain of the wood, or you can emphasize it. This is a matter of personal preference and the procedure is nearly the same, but the materials are different.

Here's what you'll need:

- TSP (Trisodium Phosphate)
- An oil based enamel paint (to emphasize wood grain) or a water-based enamel (to hide the grain)
- A sandable bonding primer (oil or water based, to match the paint)
- Random orbital or palm sander w/ sanding discs
- Scotch-brite pad
- Buckets, scouring sponge, rags

Step by step instructions:

1. Remove the doors, drawers and all cabinet hardware (hinges, pulls, etc.)
2. Clean the doors and cabinet frame with TSP.
 - a. Follow the directions on the package for mixing instructions.
 - b. Clean doors, front and back, paying special attention to the edges and to the edges of any raised panels where grime tends to build up.
 - c. Clean using a scrubbing sponge.
3. Rinse the cabinet, doors and drawers with clean water. Dry with towels and allow to air dry before staining.
4. Fill any dents or holes with a sandable wood filler.
5. Sand your cabinets with 80-100 grit sand paper until smooth, then sand with 120-150 grit sand paper.
6. Wipe away all sanding dust with a tack cloth, or with a rag dampened with mineral spirits.
7. Prime your cabinet

If you are painting your cabinets a dark color, have your primer tinted so that fewer paint coats are needed to achieve your desired color.

- a. Apply a thin coat of primer, brushing with the grain of the wood, to all of the surfaces that you intend to paint. Allow the primer to fully dry.
 - b. If you plan to hide the wood grain, sand the primed surface lightly, then apply a second, heavier coat of primer.
 - c. Lightly sand the primed surface prior to painting. You want the surface to feel smooth when you run your hand over the surface.
 - d. If you plan to hide the grain, the primer should fill the grain so that it is no longer visible.
8. Clean the surface again with a tack cloth or a rag dampened with mineral spirits.

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9. Apply the first coat of paint

If you decide to use an oil-based enamel paint, you can add Penetrol to the paint, which keeps the paint “wet” longer, which makes the paint level itself better.

- a. Use a good quality paintbrush.
 - b. It is critical that when you apply the paint, you brush it with the grain of the wood and do not repeatedly go over the surface to level it. As the paint dries and starts to set up, if you continue to brush it, you will see brush marks in your finished job. Stop while the paint is still wet and can level itself.
 - c. Allow the finish to dry based on the manufacturer’s instructions.
 - d. If a second coat is desired, scuff sand between coats with a scotchbrite pad.
10. Allow the paint to dry per the manufacturer’s instructions, then reinstall the doors, drawers and hardware.