



How to Care for Your Furniture

We at Hardwood Artisans think of the furniture pieces that we deliver as being our *ambassadors*. A large percentage of our business comes from repeat customers and from word of mouth. It is important to us that you *like* your Hardwood Artisans Furniture. Here are some answers to the most frequently asked questions concerning finish and care.

How is my furniture finished?

The majority of Hardwood Artisans furniture gets finished with a specially formulated Danish oil finish. Often there is no staining or coloring step. This type finish is called a *natural* finish because there is no color added. What you see is the natural color of the wood. In addition to this natural finish, we offer some finishes where a stain coat is applied before (under) the Danish oil top coat. These stained finishes include our *English Oak*, *Medium Walnut*, *Mahogany Wash*, and others.

Once the furniture piece has been assembled, sanded and inspected, it is sent to our *finishing section*. There we apply the finish. The surfaces of the furniture piece are flooded with the Danish oil. These surfaces are kept wet approximately 45 minutes. The oil penetrates into and between the cells and actually fills the cells nearest the surface. Then the piece is wiped dry and buffed by hand (requiring a large amount of elbow grease). Our special Danish oil finish is then allowed to set up (dry). The finish will be dry enough to handle and use the next day. The finish, however, will continue to harden for the next two weeks or so. If the furniture that gets delivered to you has a slight oily feel, don't worry about it. This will go away in a short time.

To understand how this Danish oil finish works, it is helpful to understand a little about wood. Wood comes from trees. Trees are made up of cells (remember your basic biology?). When the cells are still alive, they are filled with fluid (mostly water). The cell walls are composed of *cellulose*. The trees get harvested and cut into boards. The boards are put into *drying kilns* (large ovens). Most of the water is removed from the cells. The cell walls retain their shape. So furniture grade hardwood is a honeycomb of mostly hollow cellulose walled compartments.

We also offer some finishes where there is a shot (applied with a spray gun) lacquer top coat. This is done where there is a lot of color pigment that needs to be locked in place, like with our *White Wash* and *Americana* finishes. We are also asked to do color and finish matches, and this can involve a lacquered finish. So although the majority of our furniture gets the Danish oil finish, there are some exceptions. If you are not sure what finish your furniture has, call for a service representative at 703-643-1044.

Why do we use an oil finish?

We feel that no finish shows off the woodworking craft as well as a properly applied hand rubbed oil finish.

An oiled finish is remarkably durable. While it is not a good idea to leave a wet glass on an oiled surface for hours on end, a kitchen table that has a proper Danish oil finish can withstand all the abuse that it would get during a normal meal. And it can be wiped clean with a damp rag. Should an area get nicked or scratched, an oiled finish is easily spot-repaired: a hard (shot) finish is not (more on this later).

A lot of time and attention has been spent in wood selection, joinery, and fit and finish details.

Hardwood Artisan furniture has been designed to be *used* - not to be *protected*. The normal use that a piece of furniture endures should *add* to the overall feel. Like a pair of blue jeans that have become really comfortable, we want you to *like* the Hardwood Artisans furniture more and more as time passes. A dent or scratch on a gloss lacquered dresser top may be abhorred as damage: on an oiled finish, it may be enjoyed as *character*.

How should I care for my Hardwood Artisans furniture?

Our furniture is completely finished and ready to use. If you did nothing but dust it, it would be just fine. Work surfaces such as on desks and tables can accumulate smudges and dirty areas. These are best cleaned with a mild solution of Murphy's Oil soap. After cleaning, dry and buff with a towel.

Note: The following section applies only to furniture that has our Danish Oil finish.

As we noted earlier, when you received a new piece of Hardwood Artisans furniture, the Danish oil finish will not have entirely set up. So for the first two weeks, don't apply any furniture polish. During this time, as the finish hardens, it will be pulled deeper and deeper into the wood cell structure. This is called *wicking* (in old oil lanterns, the fuel would be drawn up into the flame through the wick by what is known as *capillary attraction*).

If you want to enhance the appearance of your furniture, obtain a small can or bottle of a clear (non-colored) lightweight furniture polishing oil. Hardwood Artisans sells a product called ***Kerf's Wood Lotion***, which we think is excellent for this. As always, first read the directions on the product label. You will also need several small clean lint free rags and possibly some four "0" steel wool. There is, strictly speaking, no "right" or "wrong" way to go about this. You will be rewarded for your efforts with a piece of furniture that seems to glow. This build of finish is called a *patina* (from Latin 'shallow pan' refers to the crud that forms with use on a pan that was thought to enhance the taste of the food).

Never polish furniture that is dirty or dusty. First, wipe off all the surfaces that are going to be polished with a slightly damp rag. If the wood is a light color (birch, maple oak, etc) and has picked up what we call *hand traffic* (smudges or dirt that won't lift with a damp rag), mix up a weak solution of warm water and Murphy's Oil soap and scrub these areas

clean. The wood must completely dry before applying any furniture polish. Pour a small puddle of the polish directly onto one of the horizontal surfaces (dresser or table top). The rag that you use to apply the polish should only be about six inches square. Spread the polish around but also, get the rag completely covered. Don't soak the surfaces. Extend the polish as far as it will go and don't spare the elbow grease. More polish can be applied to a flat surface or directly to the rag. Only the outside or "show" surfaces need to be polished. Also, take care to not get the polish on any metal hardware as it may react with the metal surfaces. It is best to remove the drawers and also get the top edge of the drawer and about an inch into the drawer opening.

If you notice that an area is rough, use the steel wool lightly on this area while the surface is still damp with the polish. In other words, use the polish as a lubricant. This will prevent the area from being dulled by the steel wool. Only a small patch of steel wool need be used and this small piece can be used over and over.

When you have finished polishing the piece, go back over all the surfaces and buff them until they are completely dry. Some open grained woods (oak, mahogany and walnut) may tend to *bleed black* (small droplets of polish re-appear) five or ten minutes after the buffing is complete. If this happens, rebuff. Best would be to not put anything on the surfaces for at least an hour after the final buffing is complete.

What should I do to repair damage?

No matter what type of wood your furniture is made from or what type of finish it has, nicks and scratches, stains and water damage, or use and abuse mishaps can usually be fairly easily repaired. Since there are so many possibilities here, you should call for a service representative at 703-643-1044 to get our advice and assistance. We want your furniture to look good as much as you do.