

DIY Guidelines

Part 2 – Weatherproofing the Project

The success of any finishing project is very dependent on the condition of the surface that is going to be coated, as well as the preparation of the surface. If a varnish type finish is expected to hold up well in an exterior situation, the pieces must in effect be “weather-proofed” so that exposure to continual moisture doesn’t have a chance to lift the coating.

Joint Integrity

All of the joints in the structure must be properly glued and holding together. If there is excessive movement in any joint areas, proper repairs should be made before the finishing project, otherwise the coating may crack and allow moisture entry. If any joints need repair, clean them out thoroughly with a saw blade or sharp knife, and then flush away the debris with acetone. Re-glue the pieces with epoxy or a polyurethane adhesive like 3M 5200.

Exposed end grain areas must be fully sealed with either epoxy or the coating material, or both. Saturate these areas repeatedly until no more material is absorbed.

Mounted and Bedded

Any wood that is mounted to other structures such as deck areas should be properly bedded in compound that will keep moisture out of the back side of the piece. This is an area that can be unrecognized as a future problem, but is actually very easy to deal with. If you don’t know if there is bedding compound present, you should assume that there isn’t. It’s surprising how many manufacturers overlook this very important step. If there seems to be compound in place, but it has breaks or gaps, these must be caulked. Make a close inspection to see if a knife blade or piece of paper can go between the wood and the mounting surface. If so, there will be a problem with moisture intrusion.

When a small piece is easily removable, clean the mounting side thoroughly and bed it back in place with Dolphinite, polysulfide or a non-adhesive bedding compound. Don’t use silicone caulks or household caulks for any reason. If the piece cannot be removed, clean out the joint and caulk with 3M 5200. Scrape clean with a knife or razor blade, and flush away the debris with acetone. Next, caulk the entire edge with 3M 5200, forcing the material into the joint as far as possible with a fingertip. Finally, wipe up all excess or visible material with the recommended solvent and plenty of rags and allow it to cure.

Screw holes should be sealed with a removable compound. Don’t use any type of silicone caulk, as it offers no adhesion to wood, and it is not paintable. Use polysulfide type material

There is one final step in the sealing process that comes later, but we’ll cover it here. After the other preparation steps are completed, the masking-off process must be done. When applying tape, back the tape away from any joint by 1/32" to 1/16, to make sure that no small slivers of wood are left bare. Then the coating is applied over the entire piece and the caulking, and it forms a seal properly onto the mounting surface.

The Project Moves Along

Now you’ve really made some progress. It’s time to start with the coating application. The next article, DIY Guideline Part 3 covers some basic and easy painting technique information

These steps may sound like a lot of work and bother, but trust us- the old saying is completely true - proper and thorough preparation accounts for at least 90% of your success. These prep steps will pay off for many years to come, and make that beautiful finish stay that way for a long time!