

Suggestions for Finishing Bed Wood

All bed wood is made of hard, durable wood, pre-sanded and ready for your finishing. You can order bed wood and bed wood kits online @



Our experienced wood cutters follow strict guidelines for selecting, checking, sorting and machining the boards to manufacture an excellent product. We select and machine oak bed wood from the finest quality Appalachian red oak lumber. We sand, groove and cut the oak boards to size. Our pine is planed to thickness, grooved and cut to size and should be sanded before finishing. We recommend you finish your wood as soon as possible after you receive it in order to achieve the best results.

The finish is very important for long-term enjoyment of your bed wood floor. A quality finish maintained over time will protect the wood for years. Applying a durable and attractive finish for your project will require time and effort but the steps are not difficult and do not require expensive equipment.

There is not a single best finish to use since each person's preferences and resources are different. Local professionals who work with wood products used or installed outdoors may recommend a product suited for your climate. Always select a top quality product and be sure it is designed for outdoor use and provides UV (ultraviolet) protection. Exterior urethane varnish may be applied directly to the bare wood and will provide a natural wood finish with great appearance. Minwax Helmsman or McCluskey's Man-O-War are two such products. They are easy to apply and dry overnight, although multiple coats are needed. These will generally be suitable for bed wood applications that will rarely see severe weather extremes or direct sun exposure.

A more durable finish may be obtained by using a two stage coating system. The primer or seal coat is a product such as epoxy whose function is to seal the wood and provide great adhesion to the wood surface. The topcoat product will adhere to the first coat and provide strength and damage protection as well as UV protection from deterioration due to sunlight exposure. All clear coatings that provide UV protection need to be recoated periodically, depending on the amount of sunlight exposure. Their UV protection is gradually degraded by exposure to sunlight. Be sure to inspect the finished surface regularly and repair the topcoat material at the first sign of damage or failure.

Penetrating oil finishes that are intended for outdoor or marine use are available and will protect the bed wood. When used by themselves, they will not generally have a shiny appearance, but will provide some protection from deterioration and can be renewed easily, just by cleaning and applying additional coats. Be sure to follow the supplier's instructions for proper application. Oil furniture finishes are not recommended for bed wood applications as they provide very little protection from damage and may not have good UV absorption to protect the wood.

Here are a few guidelines and suggestions that will help you achieve excellent results.

1. The boards must be kept clean. Keep your hands clean and be sure tools and work benches are free of grease and dirt.
2. Be sure the bed to frame bolt holes and bedside to bed wood bolt holes are drilled before finishing the wood. Finish the wood before it is installed so that all surfaces are coated.
3. Sand the surface with 120 grit and again with 180 or 220 grit sandpaper. Pine should be sanded enough to remove any planers marks. Always use a flat sanding block when sanding oak or pine to prevent cutting away the softer parts of the wood grains. Remove all sanding dust before applying the finish.
4. Failure of the finish usually occurs first at a sharp edge of the board or at the ends. Two hints:
 1. Round over all the sharp edges of the wood to at least 1/16" radius and more if you can. This will keep the coating from becoming thin on these areas.
 2. Be sure to saturate the ends of the boards with the coating until they will not absorb any more. We try to put twice as many coats of finish on the ends of the boards as on the surfaces.
5. Do not use the paint or varnish right out of the can. Always strain the amount you will need into a clean container and put the lid tightly on the original can. Do not return thinned paint or varnish to the original can.
6. Apply a thin coat using a high quality brush or paint spray gun. Be sure to coat all edges and ends of the boards, inside of all drilled holes, as well as the top and bottom surfaces.
7. When using a brush, be sure to clean the brush thoroughly between coats. If a small amount of varnish remains in the brush, it will dry and flow into the next coat of varnish leaving the finished surface rough.
8. After allowing plenty of time for each coat to dry, sand the surface to be re-coated with 220 grit sandpaper and a sanding block. Sand just enough to remove brush marks or "orange peel". Be sure to remove all sanding dust before applying the next coat. It is best to do sanding in a separate room to keep the paint room clean and free of sanding particles.
9. Re-coat the boards on all surfaces following steps 4 through 7 above to obtain at least 3 full coats covering the boards. Do not sand the boards after the final coat.

10. Inspect the wood regularly after installation and repair or refinish any damages that appear over time. The wood will provide a long life if the finish is maintained and repaired as needed.