

Deep Dark Finishes for Light Toned Woods

First, to avoid confusion,

Wood Coloring Terminology:

Stains;

also known as ‘pigmented wiping stain’ have fine ground pigments in a vehicle that has body resins, dryers and sometimes a little dye. The pigment in stains catch in the open pores and end grain areas of the wood and emphasize grain and structure. Wiping Stains are available in solvent and waterborne formulas. Generally, a solvent based stain gives a longer working time especially in hot, dry or drafty conditions.

Dyes;

are available as liquid concentrates or as dry powder to be mixed into water, alcohol, or special solvents. Solvent Based Dyes (*usually an alcohol blend*) are referred to as NGR (*Non Grain Raising*) dyes as the quick evaporation of the solvent limits the wet time on the wood. Dyes do not have ground pigments that settle to the bottom of the container. Transparency and penetration into the wood make dyes the first choice for coloring by many professional finishers and furniture factories.

Unfortunately, terminology is thrown around rather loosely. Some Dyes are labeled as stains and some Pigmented wiping stains are labeled as ‘dye stains’ as they may include dye in the formula.

The Problem:

Most wiping stains with body resins, drying agents and ground pigments are limited to the depth of color they can produce especially on light woods. An Extra Dark Walnut stain on Walnut will generally give a satisfactory result. A dark wiping stain on light toned woods such as alder, birch or pine will never yield tones equal to the same color applied on a darker wood. Reapplication of another coat will obscure and muddy wood grain and approach a ‘painted look’. A thick coat of stain can prevent the finish coat from adhering to the wood, resulting in a finish that chips from the stain layer.

The Solution:

If a light toned wood is close to walnut in color, a coat of the Extra Dark Walnut Stain will give the desired result. Use a Dye on the bare wood to make the wood as close to the final color as possible. Dye has no resin or body components and leaves the wood open to application of any successive stain, topcoat or finishing schedule. The dye is not part of the finish schedule, (it provides no protection or build); the dye gives you the right wood base tone on which to build the final color, it’s like buying the desired wood in the first place. Light reflects from the wood substrate through translucent finishes to our eyes. Toning clear finishes and staining a blonde wood will never give the same result for a mahogany finish as it will on mahogany. Turn the blonde wood to a mahogany tone with dye, then a mahogany wiping stain will more readily and accurately yield a desired mahogany finish.

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Basic Finishing Schedule:

Dark (or Medium toned) Finishes on light toned woods

1 - Dye the bare wood:

- A - Mohawk Ultra Penetrating liquid NGR solvent Dye
- B - Metal Complex Dye Powder - water or alcohol
- C - Aniline Dye Powder - water or alcohol

2 - Sanding Sealer or Seal Coat Sealer protects the background, or dye base color from absorbing colorants from the wiping stain.

3 - Pigmented Wiping Stain (*this may be omitted if the dye provides the desired tone*) On open grained woods, use a darker stain to emphasize grain. Use a similar color stain as the background color to minimize the grain.

4 - Finish Building -- 2 Coats
Use Gloss Lacquer, Shellac or Varnish

5 - Topcoat - Lacquer, Shellac or Varnish
Use the desired sheen, or Gloss if the finish is to be rubbed out or polished to a high gloss.

Notes:

- #1: NGR dyes may be added to most topcoats to make a toner to further enhance color and the depth of finish.
- #2 On Deep Dark tone finishes, Flatt & Dead Flatt sheens are NOT recommended. Very Dark finishes show & emphasize abrasions and oils from finger or hand prints.

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