

High Gloss Urethane Finish - My Way!

After looking to find a good way to achieve a heavy, glossy, clear finish I decided to just wing it. Many manufacturers say you should build clear coats gradually, with careful sanding and brushing. I've also heard of some finishers who don't care for water based polyurethane. Here's what I've found:

After preparing the surface and staining a very heavy coat of water based crystal clear urethane was literally MOPPED onto the object. To do this without runs, the surface should be as level as possible. After the first coat is cured well it was sanded with 1000 grit sandpaper. Yes, I said 1000 grit! Buy it at automotive supply houses. Then another very heavy coat was mopped on. I use a sign painting quill because it's very soft and holds a lot of material. After a coat is flowed on it should be checked for bubbles and dry spots by looking at the shine with a backlight. Touch these flaws with a loaded brush and let the finish flow out. A third coat will give a marvelous, rich finish.



This is a closeup of a freshly flowed on coat of urethane while still wet. Notice the highlights showing how thick it is. Notice also the bluish haze. The blue disappears when the varnish dries.

Some regard water based urethanes as too harshly clear, but my experience shows that if I adjust the base colors to account for the lack of any color in the top coat, it looks good. After the third coat, this finish is extremely hard and glossy with all pores in the wood filled up.

On the example shown, a three dimensional object, the front and back surfaces are completed separately and then the edges are treated, doing only the surfaces that are 'up' so as to avoid drips and runs. The urethane blends well at the edges and it looks fine when dry.

I don't know if the technique will work well on rounded objects like bowls and vases, however. It may be that to reduce the likelihood of runs many thin coats would be needed. The emphasis though, is on the final finish. This material will build well and pores and soft grain fill well, too. The finish is like a grand piano!