

Finishing

For Commercial and Industrial Wood Finishers

APPLICATIONS

Glazing: An Overview

Beautiful glazing requires multiple steps

By John Draughn and David Kennedy

The popularity of glazed finishes — particularly for kitchen cabinetry and residential furniture — shows no sign of abating. While consumers continue to be drawn to the depth and richness of glazed finishes, finishers are honing their techniques and making careful choices about glazing effects, methods and materials.

Overall, glazing influences the appearance of the finish by slightly deepening its color and adding depth and richness. Glazes may be used to add contrast, and focus attention on the profiles of a particular piece or as part of a distressing process. In the kitchen cabinet industry, glazing is typically part of a three- to five-step finishing process, while in the residential furniture industry, glazes are more likely to be incorporated into a much more com-



plex, 18- to 25-step finishing process.

Glazes should be applied directly over a clear seal coat or a pigmented finish. Glazes applied over clear sealers or pigmented finishes will limit the penetration of the glaze, and will allow the finisher to wipe off the glaze to a greater degree for a cleaner effect. All types of glazes must be coated with a final clear coat to protect the glaze and add durability to the finish.

After a glaze is applied there are multiple methods for working and manipulating it to create different decorative effects. The following describes some of the most popular application methods.

When choosing a glaze, finishers should consider compatibility with other components of the finishing system and the porosity and texture of the coating over which the glaze will be applied.

- **Clean wipe**

A clean wipe glaze is commonly performed over a painted or a color-coated finish. The glaze adds a subtle layer of color to the finish, but is not typically left hanging on the surface or profiles. Soft cheesecloth folded into a pad with a soft circular motion is the best technique for wiping the glaze. For the final wipe, clean cheesecloth is used, with strokes following the direction of the grain. With a clean wipe glaze, profiles are wiped first followed by the flat surfaces.



- **Brushed glaze**

A brushed glaze, also known as a dragged glaze, provides a decorative effect with the brush lines most commonly running in the direction of the grain. After the glaze is applied, it is generally best to wipe off the excessive material with cheesecloth in the direction of the grain.

Immediately after the initial wipe down, brushing is done with a high-quality soft-bristled brush stroked gently through the glaze in the grain direction. When the brush eventually builds up with the glaze, it is necessary to wipe the brush on a clean dry rag. Continue to stroke the material as the glaze dries until the desired effect is achieved.

- **Scratch glaze**

A scratch glaze provides a similar effect to a brushed glaze, often with less artistry required at the hand of the finisher. Before the glazing is applied, the substrate must be sanded carefully in the direction of the grain. Coarse grit allows the glaze to hang in the scratch profile and to be more visible, while finer grit provides a subtler glaze effect. The glaze application and wiping process is the same as the clean wipe process.

- **Hanging glaze**

A hanging glaze adds color to the overall finish, corners, crevices, and profiles and has a more dramatic effect than a clean wiped glaze. Hanging glazes are typically medium- to heavy-bodied materials that allow the glaze to hang in the profiles without running or wiping out too easily. Cheesecloth is used to wipe off excess. Additionally, wiping down excess into the profiles in a manner that bridges over the corners and crevices allows the glaze to hang and accent these areas with contrasting glaze color. Next, a brush in an appropriate size and shape is used to feather out the glaze from within the profiles. A final step should be a cheesecloth wipe on all edges and flat surfaces.

Glazes never contribute to increased adhesion within the finishing system, and in varying degrees, the adhesion of any coating applied directly over the top of the glaze will be affected. As a result, it is important with all glaze applications to ensure that a heavy buildup of glaze is not left on the substrate, or adhesion will be compromised. One way to do this is to perform a test panel to verify



satisfactory adhesion results before incorporating the glazing steps into the finishing process. Test panels should be checked for adhesion 24 hours after the topcoat is applied and two weeks later to be sure the system is sound.

Selecting glazes

The selection of glazes available to furniture and cabinet finishers is almost endless. None are created equal, with each formulation exhibiting its own application and aesthetic characteristics and appearance. There are two primary types of glazing formulations commonly used: alkyd glazes and water reducible glazes. Powder glazes, also available, are primarily used in residential furniture finishing systems and are only rarely used for kitchen cabinet finishing systems. Our discussion here focuses on alkyd and water reducible glazes.

Alkyd glazing formulations with strong, fast-evaporating solvents allow the glaze to “bite” into the substrate. Slow evaporating solvents allow the glaze to wipe cleaner and provide a longer open time for increased workability. Alkyd glazes may be rag-, brush- or spray-applied over sealed or painted wood and selectively wiped off to achieve dark areas in corners and profiles.

Water reducible glazes can be used

in the same way as their alkyd counterparts, but must be mixed with a water reducible stain concentrate for the desired color. Water reducible glazes are also acceptable for use under some solvent-based finishes.

Glazes must be compatible with the other components of the finishing system, including sealers, basecoats and topcoats, but also critically important is the porosity and the texture of the coating over which the glaze will be applied, which dictate how the glaze penetrates the surface.

Depending on the previous coat, the glaze will vary in color. Using a coating with too low or too high porosity under the glaze may cause the glaze to wipe off too clean or bite into the coating leaving the overall finish color too dark. When glazing over sealer, primer or color coats, it is also important to apply these coatings uniformly and consistently throughout the process. This helps provide uniformity in the appearance of the glaze on the final product as well as from component to component.

Sanding. When sanding over sealer, primer or color coats for glazing, the appropriate grit of sandpaper or abrasive should be selected. Various grits

will leave different scratch patterns for the glaze to “hang up” within. Coarser grits provide a more visible scratch pattern, causing the glaze to appear darker. Finer grits provide a subtler abrasive pattern, and when combined with lighter glaze color will result in a lighter, more subtle glaze appearance. Sanding must be performed consistently throughout the entire finishing process to maintain consistency of color in the glaze. Sanding is typically done in the direction of the grain pattern.

Glaze application. While brushing and ragging are appropriate methods for applying glaze, a spray gun is often the best choice for faster application. For the best results with heavier-bodied glazes, the spray equipment should be set up with medium to large fluid nozzles or tip orifices. Just enough glaze material should be applied to the substrate to allow the finisher to successfully manipulate the glaze. Applying too much glaze will result in excessive wiping and material waste. Insufficient application may result in the glaze drying too quickly, which may affect the workability of the glaze or cause the color of the glaze to be inconsistent.



Different techniques are used to apply glazes depending on the desired look. Application tools include brushing, ragging and spray guns.



Ed. note: John Draughn, market development director, Color & Design, and David Kennedy, Chemical Coatings' market development director, Kitchen Cabinets, work for The Sherwin-Williams Company. Sherwin-Williams Global Color & Design Center works closely with furniture designers to assist manufacturers in creating finishes that have strong consumer appeal. All of the steps of furniture finishing, including glaze application, are demonstrated on a video available for viewing at www.sherwin-williams.com/oem.



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