

Tips for Refinishing Front Entry Doors

A number of owners have refinished their wood front entry doors. If you want to strip down the wood and refinish the door, below are some tips

Sanding Down and Resealing Front Door

- The easiest and fastest way to work on the door is to take the door off of the hinges and work on it flat on saw horses (or boxes or anything else that allows you to work on the door at a comfortable height). If you work on the door without taking it off the hinges, you may want to consider hanging plastic on the inside to keep the saw dust out of the house. If you work on the door on the hinges, you will need to leave the door open while applying multiple coats of polyurethane. Much faster and easier to work on the door off the hinges
- Easiest to remove door hardware so you don't have to try to sand around hardware.
- Use an electric hand sander with a very coarse grade of sandpaper to remove all of the old finish. The coarse sandpaper allows you to remove more of the old finish faster. Make sure to only sand in the direction of the wood grain. After you have removed old finish, resand with a finer grade of sandpaper.
- Recommend not trying to remove old finish from the cracks & grooves in the door. Use steel wool to smooth out excess finish in cracks. If you try to sand cracks & grooves, it will take twice as long and you will probably damage the wood trying to sand out crevices. People who have not sanded cracks & grooves have been happy with the end result.
- If you need to fill any cracks in the door, make sure to use a stainable wood filler. If you use a non-stainable filler, you will create a mess (filled cracks will stand out in a different color than the door).
- Most of the doors do not require any stain. When you coat with polyurethane, it will darken the wood. Try a spot on the door before using any stain.
- Stain if you need to. Apply 2 or 3 coats of outdoor polyurethane. You can use "high gloss" but most doors have a "gloss" or "satin" finish.
- Recommend not using a combination stain / seal product. If you do use this product, make sure it dries totally (like 24 hours) before applying a second coat – otherwise the stain does not dry and stays sticky (and can't be sanded off without gumming up sandpaper)

General Maintenance – Touch Up

If the door is looking a little weathered but does not need to be stripped and resealed, you may want to consider some wood maintenance options rather than stripping and resealing the doors.

- Cleaning the wood with soap and water and then sealing with products like Liquid Gold or other wood care products. Repeat every couple of months to keep door looking good and to keep the wood from drying out.
- Doing a very light sanding, cleaning the wood and then using a sealer. A couple of owners have used combination stains / seals. This option may work if minor touch up is needed but may not last for long.