



Doors by Decora

Finishing Instructions

CONGRATULATIONS!!! Thank you for buying a Doors By Decora door. Your entry system has been handcrafted especially for you. Much time has gone into the design of our doors. All of the wood has been hand selected for the best match of both grain and color. With the proper installation, finish and care this door should be the only door your house will ever need.

FINISHING INSTRUCTIONS

Important: Doors by Decora have been handcrafted from the finest hardwoods available. The wood in your door has been kiln dried to a moisture content of 6% to 8% for optimum stability. It is important that your door be stained and finished on all six sides within 24-48 hours of delivery.

I - WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

It is important that you have the right expectations about the finish on your door. These notes are to help you understand and make decisions about the finishing process:

1 - No finish available today will provide 100% long term protection for your door. Finishes on metal doors, vinyl doors or wood doors will fade and deteriorate over time. When the finish on these doors breaks down not only will they look bad but the door can be damaged if not painted or refinished. The difference in these doors and a stained and finished hardwood door is that when moisture penetrates the finish of a wood door and is neglected for a period of time the wood begins to discolor or turn gray. Proper maintenance will prevent this and refinishing will rejuvenate your door.

2 - Door Enemy #1 is the sun. When a door is finished, the finish has elasticity which allows it to stretch and contract with your door. Over time all finishes lose this elasticity. Direct long term exposure to the hot sun will speed up this process; this is one of the reasons no one can tell you how often your door will need refinishing. When the finish hardens it no longer will stretch with the wood but will open hairline cracks in the finish. On stile and rail doors these usually first occur where two pieces of wood come together. Now water gets into the act. The protective seal is broken and moisture can begin to get between the finish and the wood. When this occurs you will first see these cracks as yellowish lines. This is your sign that maintenance is needed soon.

(See Suggested Door Maintenance)

3 - Something to remember is that wood comes from a living breathing tree and is more sensitive to the elements than metal, but is far more beautiful. The reason most people select a wood door is for the warm natural look that it gives their home. Doors By Decora has hand selected all the wood used in your door for the best match in grain and color but since wood is a natural product these characteristics will vary in every inch of every board. That is part of

its beauty. It is important to realize that many woods change color when exposed to air and light. Mahogany, for instance, will darken; this means that two boards that start off the same may darken differently. It is recommended that hardwood doors be stained prior to applying finish. The stain tones the wood to go with its surroundings and helps even out color variations that may occur over time.

4 - We recommend using oil based penetrating stain. There are a lot of good ones on the market. The brands we use most are Min-Wax and Campbell's.

5 - It is important that you use a good finish to protect your door as discussed above. There are three products that we use. We prefer a satin finish on our doors rather than a high gloss. Min-Wax has a finish called Helmsman and Deft has a product called Defthane that are formulated for exterior doors. Both products are available in gloss or satin finish. Both are easy to find in most areas and do a good job. The third product we use is from Pettit and is called Ultra Gold. It is hard to find and is only available in high gloss. Ultra Gold has a real high UV protective content and holds up longer in areas where you have extreme exposure to hot sun and rain.

II - PREPARATION

All Decora doors have been factory sanded before shipping. However, the wood fibers on the surface of an unfinished door will "raise" until sealed due to changes in temperature and humidity. The nail holes have been left unfilled so they can be filled with putty the same color as the stain you plan to use on your door. We will often mix a little stain with the putty to get the right color. All wood surfaces will need additional sanding to prepare for finishing. Most finish manufacturers recommend that you first sand with 150 grit sandpaper after filling all nail holes, and stepping up to 180 grit for the final sanding. Proper sanding of all wood components is important to achieve the most consistent color from your stain. Sanding should always be done with the grain.

III - WHAT TO FINISH

Wood will adsorb moisture from the air as well as when it gets wet. As the moisture content of wood changes so does its size. The top and bottom of the door stiles have "end grain" which will absorb moisture continually if not sealed properly. It is important that all six sides of the door be finished including the top and bottom. A sticking door is usually a sign of moisture getting into the door. If your door has raised panels you should be aware that these raised panels are fit "snug" in the door when built but are not glued into place so that they can expand and contract without splitting. The finish is what seals the edge of these panels to the rest of the door and prevents leakage. A leaking door is generally a sign of improper finishing.

IV - STAINING

After the wood has been prepared as above you should apply an oil based penetrating stain. You should always follow the stain manufacturers recommendations for properly applying their product. Make sure that the stain you have selected is compatible with the finish you plan to use. We recommend allowing the stain to dry for at least 24 hours before going to the next step.

V - FINISHING

Now that your door has been properly sanded and stained you are ready to start applying finish to your door. Select a clean dust free area in which to apply finish to your door to prevent getting trash in the finish. Between each coat of finish sand all wood surfaces with 220 grit sandpaper. Clean all dust from the wood by blowing off, using a clean dry rag or a tack rag. Do not use rags that might have oil in them. Applying a minimum of three coats of finish is extremely important. Research has proven that the first coat of finish often provides little more than 10% protection from moisture penetration, the second coat can increase this between 30% and 80%, the third coat will result in protection above 90%. Additional coats can be applied until the desired finish is achieved. Always apply finish in accordance with the finish manufacturer's recommended instructions. We recommend waiting at least 24 hours between coats. Sanding between coats is important as it scratches the surface and allows better bonding of the finish.

After the final coat is applied, we recommend allowing 48 hours for the finish to completely dry and cure before shipping or installing the door.

SUGGESTED DOOR MAINTENANCE

A properly finished hardwood door is truly a thing of beauty. All doors, be they metal, vinyl or wood, require maintenance to keep them looking new. Understanding the proper on-going maintenance of your wood door will insure that it remains a thing of beauty. The amount of maintenance required for your hardwood door is dependent on the amount of its exposure to the sun, wind and rain and the condition of the protective finish. The greater the exposure to the sun, the greater the probability of oxidation and breakdown of the protective finish.

The maintenance requirements for your wood door are entirely dependent on variables unique to each installation. Below is our guide for preserving the beauty of your hardwood door.

Probably the most important step and the most neglected step in preserving the beauty of a hardwood door is "inspecting the door". Most of us do not go in and out the front door on a regular basis and do not observe the gradual changes that may occur in the door. Below are things you should look for:

1 - Graying of the door or gray splotches often causing the door to feel rough or look dirty. This is usually a sign of mildew and is most common in a humid warm climate usually in a yard with a number of pine or other trees. This problem is easily remedied by cleaning the door with a mild solution of Clorox and water. After removing the mildew it is a good idea to clean and rinse as described below.

2 - The door has become dusty, dull or just plain dirty looking. This usually occurs on doors that are well protected from the wind and rain. This calls for a little soap and water. We recommend mixing 1/4 cup mild detergent like liquid Tide with a gallon of water and scrubbing the door lightly once or twice using a soft cloth. Be sure to rinse all the soap off the door after cleaning. We do NOT recommend using wax or furniture polish of any kind on your door. Some of these products can get into the finish and create problems with the bonding of new finish when and if your door requires refinishing.

3 - There are places on the door that are beginning to yellow. This is a sign of moisture beginning to get behind the finish. It usually is a sign that the finish has lost its elasticity and started cracking with the expansion and contraction of the wood. This is normal when the finish hardens and is directly related to the door's exposure to sun and rain. This problem can easily be remedied by first sanding the door lightly with 220 sand paper to help clean the surface and rough it up enough for a new coat of finish to stick and applying one or two more coats of finish (see Finishing Instructions "V - Finishing" above). This is an easy 30 to 45 minute "Do It Yourself" project or any painter can do it. If this problem is neglected it will get worse and become more difficult to resolve.

4 - The wood in the door is graying or yellowing in large spots usually worse at the bottom of the door. The finish may also be beginning to lift up in places. This is what happens if you do not inspect your door or neglect to handle #3 above in a timely fashion. This problem is more difficult to remedy:

A - Best Case - Aggressively sand the bad places using 180 grit sandpaper followed with 220 grit. You may need to go back to the raw wood in some places. Be sure to sand with the grain. Apply stain to the sanded areas and try to "shade" to match the color of the original finish. Usually the grain on these spots is real open and will soak up stain quickly and can become too dark if you are not careful. You can dilute the stain with mineral spirits to help prevent this. You may have to experiment with sanding and staining these spots to get your color right. After your stain has dried for 24 hours apply finish (see Finishing Instructions "V - Finishing" above).

B - Worst Case - It's time to strip the door. This is only caused by neglect and you will probably want to have a professional do it for you. In most towns there are usually people that specialize in refinishing furniture and doors. We do not recommend "dipping" a door as leaving the door in the vat too long or using too strong a stripper can dissolve some of the glues used in your door. If you decide to do it yourself consult your local paint store for a recommended stripper and use the instructions on the can. After stripping the door leave it out in the sun for a couple of days so that it dries well and you give time for the evaporation of chemicals left in the wood from the stripper. Once the door is good and dry stain and finish using the "Finishing Instructions" above.

WARNING: Doors By Decora Warranty does not apply to entry systems (either factory finished or unfinished) that are installed with no protection from the Sun. These are "high maintenance" exposures and it is the owners responsibility to maintain a protective finish and caulking at all times to prevent moisture penetration and damage to the wood components.