

Do It Yourself

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Giving Furniture an Antique Look

From "[Refinishing](#)"

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Some people enjoy the challenge of taking an inexpensive piece of unfinished furniture and giving it some of the charm and character of a fine antique.

The first step in aging a modern piece of furniture is to soften the look of the new wood. Use #120-grade sandpaper to blunt the edges and slightly round any sharp corners (**figure A**). A palm sander or sanding block will speed the process (**figure B**). Use sandpaper to mimic the signs of wear on areas such as the tops of doors and around knobs or other hardware (**figure C**). After sanding, wipe off any dust with a tack cloth.

When distressing a piece of furniture, strive for a look that's consistent with the damage that might have occurred to a real antique. Nicks, dents and insect damage are all natural signs of aging that can be reproduced with some household items and simple tools.

To imitate a cluster of termite holes, draw a pattern near the edge or end of a board using a felt-tip pen (**figure D**). Then use a drill with a 1/8" bit to create holes (**figure E**), varying the angle of the holes slightly for a more natural look. Sand the holes lightly to remove any wood burrs.

Use the edge or rough bottom of a heavy household object such as a flowerpot or cooking pan to create dents or scuffs in the wood surface (**figure F**). Use more than one object so that the marks don't look too uniform. Accidental scratches can be imitated by dragging keys or household tools such as pliers or a screwdriver across the wood (**figure G**).

A faux water-ring can be created by spraying black paint on the bottom of a can, then using part of the can's lip to make an imprint on the wood (**figure H**). It's best to practice this technique on a piece of scrap wood before using it on furniture.



Figure A



Figure B



Figure C



Figure D

Other techniques for simulating age marks include using a toothbrush dipped in ink to create "flyspecks," spilling ink to create an ink stain and leaving a burning cigarette on a tabletop to create a burn mark.

The scratches and dents you've created will show up better once a stain has been applied to the wood. To create a golden patina look--the mellowed appearance that comes from age and exposure to the sun--use a light stain such as golden oak or golden pecan. After wiping off any dust with a tack cloth and stirring the stain thoroughly, apply stain using a staining pad or soft cloth **(figure I)**. Wait about 3 minutes, then wipe off the excess stain with a soft cloth. Allow the stain to dry overnight.

A tung-oil finish provides protection for the wood while allowing it to retain an antique look--unlike the glossy finish of a varnish. Once the stain has dried completely, rub tung oil into the wood **(figure J)**, and let it dry overnight.

For a final touch, rub a coat of paste wax into the wood with extra-fine steel wool **(figure K)**. After about 5 minutes, when the wax has begun to harden, buff the finish to a satin sheen with a soft cloth. Paste wax in combination with tung oil will give the wood a look and feel similar to that of a real antique.

- **ALSO IN THIS EPISODE:**

- [Recognizing Genuine Antiques](#)

- [Giving Furniture an Antique Look](#)

- [Milk-Paint Finish](#)

- [Crackle Finishes and Antiquing Hardware](#)



Figure E



Figure F



Figure G



Figure H



Figure I



Figure J



Figure K