

Waterlox Kitchen, Bathroom & Countertop Guide

WHERE TO USE

Beautiful. Natural. Durable. That's a Waterlox finish. A unique blend of Tung oil and resin, Waterlox showcases the natural beauty of wood, providing lasting, durable protection. This elegant, one-of-a-kind finish has been made by the Hawkins family since 1910, and is still made by hand according to the original family formula.

The origin of our name, Waterlox, stands for "locks out water." Therefore, we think our Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes are the perfect solution for any and all wood finishing project(s). When you add to that your plans to finish a known water-related area like a bathroom, kitchen, counter top or table top, we think Waterlox should be the only finishing choice since no other clear finishes or surface finishes available on the market today have our superior water resistant properties. Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes are water resistant, stand up to household spills and are non-toxic and food-safe when dry. Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes have good heat resistance, can be used around stoves and are unaffected by boiling water and liquids.²

Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes are also a solution for concrete countertops; however, the number of coats may vary due to the differing levels of porosity in concrete products. Most projects will require between 3 and 4 coats of Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes.³

As with any finish, special care and attention should be used when applying the Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes. Waterlox delivers spectacular results, and to make sure you achieve just that, this guide will take you step-by-step through the proper application of a Waterlox Original Tung oil finish. We also recommend that you watch the product application video and review our FAQs. Even though this project guide is not developed for completing a large project such as a floor, you are still completing a working surface and the video will therefore be helpful.

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

FEATURES

Tung oil-based

BENEFITS

Penetrates surface

Easy to maintain

Enhances beauty of wood

Flexible

Moves with the wood

Does not chip or crack

Tolerates wide temperature ranges

Water resistant⁴

Excellent water resistance

Great for use in water-related areas⁵

Condensation on glassware will not leave rings

Protective

Protects against common household spills

Heat and Cold

Easy to Maintain

Easier to maintain than surface finishes and/or oils

Unlike common surface finishes such as polyurethanes (solvent or water-based) that conceal the wood's grain and beauty under a layer of plastic, Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes offer a unique handmade blend of Tung oil and resin that penetrates the wood, yielding a rich, hand-rubbed look that's durable and easy to maintain.

CHOOSING YOUR FINISH⁵

There is no right or wrong choice in terms of performance between each of the three interior finishing products. All Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes offer a durable protective finish that enhances the natural character of wood. Each:

Penetrates, is water resistant and forms a protective yet elastic finish against common household spills, moisture and daily use.

Non-toxic and food-safe when cured.¹

Easy to use and apply.

Easier to maintain than other interior clear finishes or surface finishes.

Lasts much longer and requires less maintenance than a raw oil.

Begin all projects with our Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish. If you would like a medium sheen, continue using the Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish for all coats required. If a lower sheen is desired, the last coat applied should be our Waterlox Original Satin Finish. If a higher gloss is desired the last coat applied should be our Waterlox Original High Gloss Finish.



Tip

Regardless of the sheen desired for your project, we strongly recommend that you begin your project with our Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish. This product allows you to seal the wood and acts as a base coat.

Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish

Produces a medium sheen (semi-gloss) appearance (75° gloss level when finished; fades to a 50-55° gloss level in 3-6 months).

Our oldest and truly “original” product, since 1910

Our most versatile product. Many customers use only this product for all coats of finish.

Waterlox Original Satin Finish

Produces a satin appearance (20° -25° gloss level).

Our lowest gloss level offered.

Used as a finish coat only, over base coats of Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish.

Waterlox Original High Gloss Finish

Produces a shiny appearance (85° gloss level).

Our highest gloss level offered.

Used as a finish coat only, over base coats of Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish.

COVERAGE/THINNING

One gallon covers 500 square feet per coat. One quart covers 125 square feet per coat. The number of coats depends upon the porosity of the wood being finished (check the wood hardness (Janka chart). No thinning necessary.

DRY TIME

Our general rule of thumb is to wait 24 hours between coats. Poor ventilation, high humidity or cool temperatures may increase dry times.

VENTILATION

Although a project may be small in scope, cross-ventilation is still needed to dry and cure each coat of finish properly. Proper ventilation and air circulation must be provided when using any wood finishing materials. Most oil-based varnishes dry upon exposure to oxygen, which is also known as “oxidative cure.” A lack of cross-ventilation (air exchange) provides less free oxygen, slowing the drying process. **Cross-ventilation is the biggest factor affecting dry times. It is not recommended that any solvents or solvent-based materials be used in a non-ventilated area.** It is the oxygen molecules in the air that interact with the varnish, creating a chemical reaction and causing the film to dry. Therefore, the better the ventilation (during and after all coats) the quicker the film obtains its final hardness and other chemical resistance properties.

ASHRAE (The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers) states that the typical air exchange in a residence using only mechanical HVAC can be as low as 0.35 air exchanges/hour. In most cases 0.35 air exchanges/hour will not be adequate to dry Waterlox in 24 hours. We therefore strongly suggest achieving a gentle flow of air by cross-ventilation. This can be achieved by the use of a box fan running at low-speed in a window or door exhausting to the outside air as well as an open window in some other part of the room or house to achieve 3 - 4 air exchanges/hour. Not only will this aide the drying process by pulling in fresh air loaded with oxygen, but it will exhaust the solvent odor.

Read the directions on the label completely before using, including information related to the use of a respirator while applying the finish. Lingering odor indicates inadequate ventilation, high humidity or both. If you cannot ventilate the area choose another product.

Be sure to use proper ventilation:

While applying the coating,

During the curing process (first 24 hours after each coating is applied), and

Continue to ventilate the area for 7 days after the final coat is applied.

Examples of poor ventilation:

Ceiling fans do not bring in fresh air from an outside source, even if windows are opened. They circulate stale air around the room. In fact, ceiling fans have a tendency to direct too much air downward on the surface of the freshly applied coating and can potentially “skin” over the fresh coat. This slows down the drying time because the solvent is trapped beneath the skin, causing a longer or improper cure.

Heating and air conditioning do not provide enough ventilation. Opened windows with air being exchanged, replenishes the room with fresh oxygen and vents the evaporating solvents.

Closed doors cut off airflow in a room even if a window fan is in place. If the window fan is working properly, solvent odors should be exhausted and will not enter connected rooms.

Closets are typically the most difficult areas to ventilate – leave closet doors fully open.

Tip

Be sure the room that you will be finishing your piece is well ventilated, but not drafty. If there are heat and air conditioning vents in the room, be sure to close off the ducts, and be sure to vacuum dust created by sanding before you begin. Room temperature needs to be above 60°F.

APPLICATION TOOLS

For safety: rubber gloves, goggles and a respirator fitted with an organic cartridge.

A natural bristle paint brush. This type of brush will hold more finish than a synthetic bristle brush.

A lint-free rag.

A container that allows decanting of the amount of finish to be used for the project.

A vacuum, compressed air, or rag wetted with mineral spirits or paint thinner.

Mineral spirits, turpentine or paint thinner.

220 and 320 grit sandpaper or 0000 steel wool (if applicable).

Tips

Cleaning/disposal methods for paint brushes between coats:

Have two containers ready. One for the brush and one for the “used” paint thinner.

Pour about 1 inch of paint thinner (mineral spirits) into one of the containers.

Insert the brush into this container and press out the bristles into the thinner. Varnish will be released into the thinner.

Pour the contaminated varnish/thinner mixture into the other can.

Repeat steps 1, 2 and 3 several times until the thinner remains clear (no varnish).

The brush is now cleaned and ready for the next coat or job.

Disposal method. Allow the brush to dry and dispose of it in a proper trash receptacle. Once the brush has dried it is inert and non-toxic. Use a new brush for each subsequent coat.

NEVER just soak the brush in paint thinner, the Waterlox will gel and you will be applying what looks like little seeds on your next coat.

CLEAN UP AND STORAGE

Clean up

Clean application tools immediately with paint thinner (mineral spirits) or turpentine. Properly dispose of rags,

applicators and waste. Read carefully cautions on the product label(s).

Storage

Keep containers of Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes closed when not in use and keep in a cool, dry place. If stored properly, an **unopened** can of Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes have an almost indefinite shelf life. Cold temperatures will not negatively affect the product, but if Waterlox has been chilled or exposed to freezing temperatures, allow the product to stand for at least 6 hours in temperatures above 60° F before using. **DO NOT** artificially heat Waterlox products.

Partially filled containers may gel since Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes dry through oxidation. When a container is opened, it is exposed to oxygen and the remaining unused portion may begin to oxidize. This leads to skinning and eventually gelling of the product.

For the best results, pour the Waterlox you need to complete your job into another container and promptly reseal the original container (replace both the metal seal and screw top on the oblong can(s) and the lid on the round can(s)). **DO NOT** return any unused portion to the original can.

For proper storage, oxygen inside the Waterlox can must be displaced, by one or more of the following methods:

Decant the product into a smaller airtight glass or metal container. **DO NOT** use plastic. If using a previously vacuum-sealed jar (e.g. pickles or baby food) use plastic wrap inside the lid to create an adequate seal.

Use clean marbles or stones to raise the level of the finish and thereby displace the oxygen.

With rectangular cans, squeeze the sides to push the liquid up and seal before the air returns into the can.

“Float” the product with an inert gas, such as carbon dioxide or argon, or Bloxygen that is heavier than air.

Read carefully all cautions on the product label(s).

STAINS AND FILLERS

In today's ever changing world, more and more products are available due to market forces and general reformulation. Therefore, we are not aware of every type of colorization and filling process available.

Stains

Generally speaking, Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish can be used over any type of stain (water-based, solvent-based, alcohol based dyes, fast set types, etc.) provided it is completely dry (follow manufacturer's recommendations for dry time or wait 72 hours, whichever is longer) and does not contain any waxes or silicones. We also recommend that you steer away from any type of stain that forms a film over the wood, for example a stain containing urethane or some thicker gel type stains.

Tips

If staining a wood project, do not skip any of the recommended coats of Waterlox as described in the project guides.

An unstained surface finished with Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes produces an old-fashioned, hand-rubbed natural looking finish. Our special formula based in Tung oil brings out the natural patina of wood. With some species of wood this will dramatically change the look and staining may not be necessary, we suggest testing an inconspicuous area of your project or a scrap piece of wood from your project first before assuming you will need a stain coat. Regardless if stain is used or not, you will want to test all coats of the finishing system before making your decision.

Keep in mind that not all pieces or boards of a single species of wood will stain the same; some will not match your sample board. Your stain/topcoat system may not transfer from one species of wood to another with the same effect.

If stain is desired, be sure to follow the manufacturer's directions for cure time or wait 72 hours, whichever is longer, before applying coats of Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes. NEVER apply Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish over a stain coat that is not dry. Applying finish over top of it will only elongate the dry time because oxygen will not be able to get to the stain coat.

NEVER sand a surface that has been stained as this process will change the color.

Fillers

Most fillers are compatible with Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes other than those containing any wax or silicone. We also recommend using fillers that are marketed as being paintable and stainable, as this is an indication that they can be coated.

Previously Finished Wood Application

Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes perform best over bare wood and are not designed to be used as a top coat over previously finished surfaces (does not refer to stain coat(s) if used). Strip previously finished surfaces to bare wood, and then apply as described under "New Wood Application".

Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes can however be applied over raw, non film-forming oils such as mineral oil, Tung oil, linseed oil, or 'mystery' oil provided the cross-hatch test for adhesion returns successful results.

Following are the directions to apply Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes over raw, non film-forming oils:

Allow the non film-forming oiled countertop to age for a minimum of 30 days.

Scuff sand the surface with 320 grit sandpaper or 0000 steel wool.

Clean the surface with a rag dampened with mineral spirits (paint thinner) which will attract any remaining dust and dirt. Mineral spirits (paint thinner) is recommended because the Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes are based in this solvent and are therefore compatible with it if any residual is left on the surface. Mineral spirits (paint thinner) also evaporates slower than other more intense solvents such as lacquer thinner.

Apply as described under “New Wood Application”.

Tip

A cross-hatch test is an industry test for adhesion. Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes are penetrating oil finishes and are therefore best used on bare wood (does not refer to stain coat(s) if used). Sometimes, sanding the surface is not an option for a project. To test the adhesion properties of a combination of finishes, test on an inconspicuous area first.

Directions to test for adhesion: Scuff sand a small inconspicuous area with 320 grit sandpaper. If you will not be sanding the surface to bare wood in the actual project, clean the area with TSP (trisodium phosphate) and water and complete a clear water rinse. Apply 1 coat of Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish. Allow the finish to cure for 4 days. Scratch a “tic-tac-toe” board into the cured finish by cutting through the film and into the wood. Place a piece of Scotch® tape over the cross-hatch and press it down firmly with your finger(s). Pull one end of the tape off with a steady motion. If there is any film on the tape, other than the pattern of cuts you made into the substrate, this finish combination will not have adequate adhesion.

If the test fails, proper sanding of the surface down to bare wood, or chemical stripping of the previous finish will need to be performed before applying Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes.

NEW WOOD APPLICATION

Waterlox may alter the appearance of the wood. Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes are based in Tung oil, which brings out the natural patina of wood. With some species of wood this will dramatically change the appearance and staining may not be necessary. Test an inconspicuous area of your project or a scrap piece of wood from your project before assuming the need for a stain coat. Even if stain is not a consideration, test all intended coats in a test area before beginning the entire project.

Preparation of the surface is the most important step in the finishing process. To maximize the penetration of Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish, sand the surface with 100 or 150 grit sand paper.

When sanding is complete, vacuum the surface thoroughly with and across the grain. Then, clean the surface with a rag dampened with mineral spirits (paint thinner) which will attract any remaining dust and dirt. Mineral spirits (paint thinner) is recommended because the Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes are based in this solvent and are therefore compatible with it if any residual is left on the surface. Mineral spirits (paint thinner) also evaporates slower than other more intense solvents such as lacquer thinner.

Whatever gloss level you choose, we recommend applying Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish as a base. The number of base coats will vary based on the type of wood being finished. As a general rule, most hardwoods will require 3 base coats. Softer woods like pine, fir or American cherry will require 4. Use the wood hardness FAQ (Janka Chart) to help determine the hardness of your wood species. Below is a breakdown of the number of coats to apply to your project:

Hardwoods

Apply as described under “New Wood Application”.

Tip

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Hardwoods

Apply all coats liberally with the grain using a quality natural bristle brush at the recommended spread rate. If your intended application method is with a rag versus applied liberally with a brush, this will most likely result in only 1/2 to 1/4 of the recommended film build for each coat. If this is your preferred method of application, double or quadruple the amount of coats applied.

Tip

Your surface may look uneven in appearance after the first or even the second coat of Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish. This is completely normal. Waterlox penetrates deep into the wood and will build up to an even film when applied with the suggested number of coats and coverage.

Sanding for adhesion purposes is not required between coats of Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes. This makes Waterlox unique and different from most surface finishes which need abrasion for inter-coat adhesion.

Most surface finishes such as urethanes require the sanding process to create what's called a "profile". A profile is similar to a mountain range microscopically. Failure to sand/abrade between coats of a surface finish can result in delamination of the new coat from the old coat. With Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes, new coats will actually bond with the previous Waterlox coat and becomes part of it rather than a layer on top of it.

Even on a finely sanded wood surface, there are peaks and valleys as well as spots of hard and soft grain. When you apply the first coat of Waterlox, it's like snowfall on the mountains. The snow caps the peaks and begins to fill the valleys. If you sand, you will unseal the caps and there will be less to flow to the valleys when you apply the next coat of finish. This will result in the cap being re-sealed again, and will therefore result in less available finish to flow into the valley. If you do not sand, then the next coat will flow away from the sealed caps and do more to fill the valleys. After the third or fourth coat, this self-leveling process is complete.⁶

Abrasion techniques for aesthetic reasons:

Heavy debris or surface imperfections can be removed from the film with 0000 steel wool, 320 grit sandpaper, or a Scotch-Brite® pad (as shown in the Waterlox product application video)

Some customers lightly sand with 320 grit sandpaper or 0000 steel wool to smooth out the finish between the second-to-last and last coat of finish. If a light sanding is performed, clean the surface with a lint-free cloth wetted with mineral spirits. Mineral spirits (paint thinner) is recommended because the Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes are based in this solvent and are therefore compatible with it if any residual is left on the surface. Mineral spirits (paint thinner) also evaporates slower than other more intense solvents such as lacquer thinner.

To remove any dust or particles that may have settled on the finished surface, while the finish is still wet, dip a small artist's brush into the container of finish you are using and wipe it off completely. With the brush's tip, touch the piece of dust. Do not push it into the finish. The dust should stick to the tip of the brush and lift away without leaving a mark.

Steel wool is an alternative to sandpaper and is easier to use on rounded objects such as table legs and ornamentation.

Keep in mind if you can visually see any sand marks in the finish before the final coat, these need to be

sanded or removed with a finer grit paper or pad before proceeding with the final coat as they WILL be visible. To check for sand or swirl marks, wipe a thin coat of mineral spirits over an area. While still wet it will give you an accurate visualization of what the final coat will look like.

If you need to smooth between coats, use as fine a grit sandpaper as possible. NEVER smooth after the first coat of finish.

Allow each and every coat to dry for 24 hours. Once the last coat of finish has been applied, allow it to cure for 72 – 96 hours. During this cure time, do not use the surface.

CURING

Even though the recommended dry time is 24 hours, Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes completely cure in 30 - 90 days.

There are two basic steps to the drying and curing of a Waterlox Original Tung oil finish:

The first step is the evaporation of the solvent “carrier” system. The evaporation of solvent usually occurs in the first 2 - 4 hours with proper cross-ventilation techniques.

The second step is the curing of the solids system, which is comprised of the Tung oil and resin. The solids system completes 95% - 98% of its cure cycle in 7 – 14 days with proper ventilation; full cure, film hardness and chemical resistance properties are achieved in 30 - 90 days with continued adequate ventilation.

As discussed above, the solvent portion of our formula is gone within 2 - 4 hours of application with proper cross-ventilation techniques. After that, any odor that remains is likely from the Tung oil itself. Tung oil is pressed from the nut of the Tung tree and is not petroleum based. Although some may notice a Tung oil odor, it is not toxic. To help determine the source of the odor, compare the odor you’re noticing to any denomination of US paper currency. Tung oil-based inks are used to print US paper currency and the odor will resemble the odor of the solids portion of our finishes.

Care after the final coat is applied.

The first 7 days are the most critical after applying Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes. Please adhere to the following practices:

After the last coat is applied, try not to use the surface for at least 24 hours.

During the first 7 days keep room/ambient temperature above 70° F if possible. Continue to cross-ventilate the room to help replenish the required oxygen needed to cure the finish.

Avoid common household spills for the first 7 days (cleaning spills with cleaners may damage or dull the finish as the film has not obtained its full chemical resistance properties).

Suggested care during construction. Red rosin paper can be used to cover the finished surface after 48 hours but should be removed each night, as the finish needs direct oxygen exposure to cure.

After 7 days, (depending on drying conditions) replace items on the surface. Some woods, such as American cherry and pine, oxidize on their own and will naturally darken during the first month.

Since the final cure of the finish occurs after 30 - 90 days, we recommend using caution for this period of time.

CLEANING AND CARE

After the Waterlox Original Tung oil finish has dried and cured for at least 7 days, cleaning may be performed. For countertop or tabletop projects, we recommend using a damp rag on the surface as needed.

When a heavier cleaning is required we suggest any of the following methods:

Waterlox Original Cleaner Concentrate (following the directions on the label). We do NOT recommend the use of other wood coating manufacturer's cleaners as these have been proven to damage all types of wood finishes including Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes; or

A solution with a maximum mixture of 1 - 2 oz. of white vinegar to 2 gallons of warm water; or

Non-abrasive diluted household cleaner (stay away from ammonia and/or bleach products); or

Murphy's Oil Soap® can be used, but will tend to reduce the gloss by leaving a film on the surface.⁷

Avoid ammonia-based and bleach-based cleaning products like Lysol®, Fantastik®, 409®, Windex® (ammonia and bleach-based products will soften the oil finish if used), and products containing wax or acrylics, and try to prevent water from pooling or standing on the surface for long periods of time.

We believe wax creates time-consuming maintenance issues, scuffs easily, leaves water spots and attracts dirt. Wax also makes it difficult to recoat your wood surface with Waterlox when necessary. Even though waxes are compatible with Waterlox finishes, we don't recommend using them for the aforementioned reasons.

Tips

After cleaning any surface finished with Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes, rinse with clear water.

Avoid puddling water for long periods of time; wipe up spills immediately.

For bathrooms, do not let soap sit directly on the finish; wipe up excess soap immediately.

RE-COAT AND MAINTENANCE

Another benefit of Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes is that they are tough enough to protect against moisture, hot beverages, fruit juices, alcoholic beverages, are easier to maintain than surface finishes and offer less time-consuming maintenance as compared with raw oils. Our motto at Waterlox is: "Not everything is fixable; but at least with Waterlox you have a chance". As your surfaces ages, complete the following to freshen it up:

Wash the surface with a neutral cleaner such as TSP (trisodium phosphate) or Spic-n-Span® and water.

Follow with a clear water rinse.

Lightly sand the surface if there is ground-in dirt with 320 grit sandpaper or 0000 steel wool.

Wipe on/feather in an additional even coat of the finish used as the previous topcoat.

Let dry for 48-96 hours before use.

PRODUCT INFORMATION HOTLINE

To answer any wood finish questions or for more information visit our website at www.waterlox.com or call 800.321.0377, Monday – Friday, 9 am – 4 pm EST (excluding holidays).

CAUTIONS

For MSDS information, visit the technical download page within the product section of our website at waterlox.com.

DANGER! CONTAINS ORGANIC SOLVENTS. COMBUSTIBLE LIQUID AND VAPOR. HARMFUL OR FATAL IF SWALLOWED. USE WITH ADEQUATE VENTILATION. KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Tung oil is non-toxic and food-safe, although, Tung oil is pressed from the nut of the Tung tree which would be considered a tree nut oil. If you or someone who will be living with the finish has a tree nut allergy, consider whether or not this is a factor in finishing your wood project.

² Waterlox has good heat resistance; however, avoid placing hot pots or pans directly on the finish. Always use a potholder, trivet or some other type of insulating material under hot utensils and pots and pans.

³ Once the project is completed, removing the finish can be very difficult as Waterlox will alter the appearance of the cement. Apply all intended coats to a small, inconspicuous area or scrap piece of cement from the project and allow to dry properly prior to the actual application. Final color effect is always influenced by the texture, porosity, and by the method of application, and will be difficult to reverse once finished.

⁴ Waterlox Original Tung oil finishes are water resistant when applied at the proper spread rate and number of coats.

⁵ We are asked quite often if our Waterlox Original Marine finishing system is recommended for surfaces near water – like a bathroom or kitchen. The simple answer is “no”, our interior Tung oil finishing line will give you the water resistance needed for these type of applications. It is true that our Waterlox Original Marine finishing products are water resistant; however, they are primarily recommended for use outdoors in direct UV as they are formulated as a traditional spar varnish finish system.

⁶ This is the most important reason to obtain the recommended spread rate of 500 square feet per gallon per coat.

⁷ Residue of any type including Murphy’s Oil Soap® should be removed by a mixture of TSP (trisodium phosphate) and water, followed by a clear water rinse before re-coating.