

Re-oiling furniture

Materials needed are old cotton tee shirts, General Finishes' Arm-R-Seal Semigloss or comparable tung oil varnish, paint thinner (mineral spirits), #0000 steel wool, tack cloths 150, 180 & 220 (or 240) grit sandpaper and rubber gloves.

Using the paint thinner and steel wool, wash the surfaces wiping with the grain. Wipe up the paint thinner with a clean dry cloth. Once dry, use dry steel wool to address any blemishes in the existing finish, such as scuffs, minor scratches or stains. Wipe the surfaces with a tack cloth to remove dust and steel wool particles.

If deeper scratches or sun bleaching are issues, you may have to use 150 or 180 grit sandpaper, with the grain of the wood, to remove them. Use a tack cloth to remove the dust.

Dents may be removed by placing a cotton cloth, wet with water, over the dent and applying a hot (cotton or linen setting) iron to the cloth. Be very careful not to let the cloud of steam burn you in the process. Sometimes several tries are needed to raise the dent back to the original shape. After the wood dries, sand the area with 150 & 180 grit sandpaper, with the grain, until the area is smooth. Use a tack cloth to remove the dust.

Cut a 9"-12" square section of tee shirt and fold into quarters. Pour enough General Finishes' Arm-R-Seal Semigloss on the rag to completely wet it and wipe the furniture with the grain. Do this in one slow continuous stroke starting at one end of a board and wiping to the other end. Overlap your strokes by an inch or so. The idea is to get an even film of finish. If you have large ridges or runs, then your rag is too wet and if you are leaving dry streaks, then it is not wet enough. You will need to add a little finish after several wipes, in order to keep the right amount of finish on the rag. Let this coat dry for at least 8 hours.

Sand with 220 or 240 grit paper and steel wool the entire surface, with the grain. Then use a tack cloth to remove the debris.

Repeat the oil application, sanding and steel wooling 3-4 times on areas where you had to sand down to bare wood.

When you have enough finish built up, steel wool and tack cloth the surface, then apply another coat and immediately wipe off most of the finish with a dry rag working with the grain. If the finish looks streaky use a buffing motion, with the grain, to remove the streaks and then wait 10-30 minutes and buff again if needed. This should produce a warm, glowing sheen. If your piece of furniture is in good shape but just looks a bit dull, then this is the only coat you probably need and you can skip the previous paragraphs on applying coats. If you prefer a glossy look, forego the dry rag and leave the last coat to dry on its own.

IMPORTANT: Do not leave your used rags balled up or throw them away in a trashcan! Oily rags have been known to spontaneously combust starting fires. Either, put them in a metal trashcan with a tight fitting lid or better yet, hang them up outside away from any building to completely dry before throwing away.