

How to care for wooden furniture

Many different factors can have negative effects on wood. Whether its sunlight or condensation from a glass, there are many steps you can take to help preserve your wooden furniture. One of the primary factors affecting how wood ages isn't the sun or water, it's the owner.

There are several outside influences that you should be aware of and try to avoid. One of the biggest is the sun. Constant exposure to direct sunlight can cause a wooden object to lose color over time. Dark woods will often bleach while lighter colors may darken. The color of the wood isn't all that is affected by the sun's rays, the finish on the wood may begin to crack or peel because of damage to the molecules that hold the finish together. In general this means you don't want your wooden furniture in the direct sunlight. If it can't be avoided then the best steps you can take are placing blinds or curtains in the nearby windows.

Another important issue is changing temperature. Over time wood can warp if exposed to extreme temperature changes, so make sure you aren't placing any wooden furniture over floor or wall vents. The air from the heating and air conditioning will damage it over time.

Some rubber lamps bases, cords and some plastics can harm the finish of a piece if left in place for an extended period of time. The best solution is to place a piece of felt or leather between the object and the surface to lessen the chance of damage.

The finish on a wood will affect how likely it is to be harmed by liquids, like glasses coated in condensation that are placed on its surface. You should always use a coaster or other insulator between your glass and the wooden surface because water can leave white marks or cause damage to the finish that has to be professionally repaired.

*A helpful tip: if you find that drawers become difficult to open over time, remove the drawer and rub a candle along the glides. The wax from the candle will cause the drawer to slide more easily.

If you do get any liquids on your furniture it's important to clean them up immediately and to be thorough. You should wipe the piece with a clean cloth soaked in mild soap and water, then use another clean damp cloth, followed by a third clean cloth. Always make sure to rub with the grain of the wood.

As with any furniture it is important to clean and maintain your piece. You should dust the piece regularly, but here are some additional tips based on the type of finish you have.

Polyurethane finishes are relatively simply to care for and are often more water resistant than other finishes. To care for these finishes simply wipe down with a damp cloth periodically, then wipe dry.

Shellac finishes are very sensitive to water and can become sticky if exposed to an extremely humid environment. Because of this you should either dust or vacuum furniture with this finish, while avoiding oil or damp furniture polishes.

Painted finishes should only be cleaned with a mild soap and water on a damp cloth and then immediately blotted dry. Stripping and refinishing is an option you can consider but should only be considered if there is no other choice to repair the surface of the piece.

If your piece has an oil finish you should check with the manufacturer regarding suggested care. With a lacquer finish you should wax it once a year early on. As the piece ages you will see that it needs waxed less often because of the buildup from past waxings. You can wax as needed, it doesn't need to be each year because waxing can restore shine and help protect your piece.

Any minor damage such as scratches or marks can be touched up with touch up sticks or scratch removers that can be found in many furniture or hardware stores.

One of the best ways to take care of your wood furniture is to purchase a protection plan, like Protection 1st. It picks up where the manufacturer's warranty leaves off. Manufacturers warranty against construction defects, but a protection plan can help you take care of accidental breakage and damage. Scratches, watermarks or burns can be repaired under such a plan, as can warping and component failure. Some exclusions may apply, but a protection plan will help ensure the value of your investment.