

Wood Shutter Finishing Guidelines For Painting & Staining

Exterior wood shutters must be properly finished before they are installed. It is important to understand that the main purpose of painting or staining the shutters is for weather protection and although finishing your shutters makes them look great, this is only a secondary benefit. The outside of your home is a harsh environment that is subject to constant sun, heat, moisture, humidity, cold, and other conditions which will quickly decay unprotected wood shutters.

Also, whether or not you are using functional shutter hardware it is important to leave a gap of at least 1/4" between the mounting surface and the shutters to prevent moisture from being trapped behind the shutter. Trapped moisture behind your wood shutters will break down the finish and eventually penetrate the wood, causing rot (both to the shutter and the mounting surface) in a relatively short period of time. Use our [Direct Mount Kit](#) for a proper decorative exterior wood shutter installation.

Painting

When painting louvered or raised panel exterior shutters, we strongly recommend ordering a metal top cap to protect the end grain. While often overlooked by a do-it-yourselfer as an unnecessary expense, a shutter top cap will prevent moisture from penetrating into the end grain and the top joints, which can significantly increase the life of the shutter. If the shutter top cap is made of galvanized steel, it should be primed and painted on all sides before installation. Use an adhesive exterior caulking sealant to secure the cap to the top of the shutter and to weatherproof.

Exterior wood shutters must be primed before they are painted. We recommend using an oil-based primer that is tinted as close to the final color as possible and using a spray system to apply. The oil-based primer will spray in a fine mist, which makes it easy to spray the corners and edges of the wood shutters. The oil in the primer will be absorbed by the wood, which will make the primer penetrate the joints better for full protection from the elements.

The paint should be a premium grade exterior latex paint. Applying exterior latex paint to your wood shutters will ensure that they do not chalk or fade as they would with an oil-based paint.

Wood Shutter Preparation

- ▶ Before painting, the wood shutters should be pre-drilled for mounting whether you are installing the shutter to the surface with screws or using hinges. This will give you a chance to prime and paint any surfaces that are left exposed by the installation process.
- ▶ Lightly sand the wood shutters to remove any loose fibers or sharp edges.
- ▶ Clean off any dust by blowing the shutter with dry compressed air or a good dusting with a clean tack cloth.

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Priming Wood Shutters

- Apply a good coat of primer on all six sides of the shutter. It is very important that all sides of the exterior wood shutters are treated equally. Ensure full coverage on all other surfaces including between louvers (if applicable).
- Allow the primer to dry as per manufacturer instructions and re-sand the shutter until the primer coat is smooth to the touch.
- Apply a second coat of primer on all six sides of the shutter and re-sand the shutter until the second primer coat is smooth to the touch. After the second coat of primer, no bare wood should be visible. If so, apply another coat followed by sanding.
- If you are using our Direct Mount Kit, apply primer to all sides of the cedar plugs.
- If you are installing a galvanized top cap, prime the top cap and ensure there are no exposed surfaces. This step is optional if using a copper top cap.

Painting Wood Shutters

- Clean off any dust by blowing the shutters with dry compressed air or a good dusting with a clean tack cloth.
- Apply the first coat on all six sides of the shutter. It is very important that all six sides of the shutter are treated equally. Failure to paint the back of the wood shutter will void the product warranty.
- If you are using our Direct Mount Kit, apply paint to the top of the cedar plug (the wide end).
- If you are installing a galvanized shutter top cap, paint the cap on all sides as well. This step is optional if using a copper top cap.
- Clean off any dust by blowing the outdoor wood shutter with compressed air or by dusting with a clean tack cloth.
- Apply a second finish coat on all six sides of the shutter.
- If you are using our Direct Mount Kit, apply a second coat to the top of the cedar plug.
- If you are installing a galvanized shutter top cap, apply a second finish coat on all sides of the top cap. This step is optional if using a copper top cap.
- If you are installing a shutter top cap, mount the cap to the top of the wood shutter using an adhesive exterior caulking sealant. Apply the sealant in an "H" pattern with a single bead down the middle and a bead over each joint in the shutter.

Wood Shutter Finishing Guidelines For Painting & Staining

Staining

Staining wood shutters is another option which can make them a beautiful addition to your home. Although this option is available on any type of wood, it is recommended that you choose a wood that is capable of withstanding a harsh exterior environment such as redwood, cypress or mahogany. Also, be aware that staining your wooden shutters will require more maintenance to keep them looking beautiful than if you paint.

We recommend using a stain that specifically protects against UV rays, as the sun can break down the wood fibers if they are exposed. Ensure that you have enough stain to do the entire job before starting – even if you buy the same brand and color of stain, it may not match the first lot exactly. It is best to apply the stain using a rag for the flat areas and a brush for the hard-to-reach areas such as between louvers.

Stain offers very little protection to the wood against the elements, so we recommend that you varnish the shutters after they are stained. Choose a varnish that is specifically designed for outdoor or marine use. We recommend using a “spar varnish” (a varnish that uses more oil than resin in its formula) to finish your shutters because of its remarkable outdoor wood protection properties. Apply the varnish to your wood shutters using clean disposable foam brushes and replace them often.

Wood Shutter Preparation

- Before staining, the wood shutters should be pre-drilled for mounting whether you are installing the shutter to the surface with screws or using hinges. This will give you a chance to stain and varnish any surfaces that are left exposed by the installation process.
- Lightly sand the wood shutters to remove any loose fibers or sharp edges.
- Clean off any dust by blowing the shutter with dry compressed air or a good dusting with a clean tack cloth.
- Ensure the temperature is within the required range of your stain manufacturer, otherwise the drying time may be affected.

Staining Wood Shutters

- Wet the wood slightly with a clean, wide paint brush. This will help ensure the stain spreads more evenly.
- Apply a consistent coat of stain on all six sides of the wood shutters. It is very important that all sides of the shutters are treated equally. Ensure that you are covering the entire surface, such as the areas between louvers (if applicable). Use the stain liberally on the wood shutter surface, but don't pour it on. Work in the direction of the grain with the rag or brush.

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- Wipe off any excess stain with a paper towel.
- Let the stain dry and then apply another coat if there are patchy areas in the wood.

Varnishing Wood Shutters

- Remove any dust from the shutters using compressed dry air or a clean tack cloth. Do not remove the dust from the shutters in the same room you intend to varnish them in.
- Varnish is notorious for taking a long time to dry, which makes it difficult to apply without dust settling before it has fully cured. Ensure you varnish your wood shutters in an area that is free from dust, preferably indoors. Wipe down your work area with a damp cloth to remove any dust. Also, be aware that dust can be generated from human skin and clothing.
- Set the temperature in your working area to between 70° and 75° F (21° and 24° C) to ensure the varnish dries as quickly as possible.
- Although it is recommended you apply varnish with a brush, be aware that brush strokes are much more apparent in varnish than with paint. Apply the varnish to one side of the shutter at a time and allow sufficient time to dry according to the varnish manufacturer's instructions. Work in the direction of the grain and apply the varnish to your shutters with long, smooth brush strokes. "Tip off" your brush strokes with lightly brushed cross-grain strokes to smooth. Do not stop mid-way in the process for any reason – finish each side of the shutter from beginning to end in one session.
- After you have put the first coat on both sides and allowed it to fully cure, carefully sand the shutters with 150 grit sand paper or steel wool until they evenly dull across the entire surface. The sanding provides a slightly rough surface for the next coat to adhere to and also provides a dull surface on which it is easy to spot any missed areas with the top coat.
- Put the shutters back in your dust-free working area and apply another coat of varnish to one side at a time, allowing sufficient drying time between sides. Follow the same procedure you used for the first coat of varnish.
- After you have finished both sides and allowed sufficient drying time, remove your wood shutters from your dust-free varnishing area inspect them for any flaws. These can be fixed without re-doing the whole job. Use 240 grit or finer sand paper to sand just the problem area and feather out the edge of the sanded spot. Apply varnish just to these problem areas once again and allow sufficient drying time before continuing.
- Once again, remove the outdoor shutters from your work environment and wet sand just the areas you fixed with a hard wood block and 600 grit or finer sand paper until they are level.
- Now wet sand the entire shutters, working your way through progressively finer sand paper, 1000 grit, 1200 grit, and then 1500 grit.
- When you have finished sanding, polish the exterior shutters with an outdoor cream polish such as Meguiar's No. 3 for an exceptional shine. This polish can be found at many retailers online or at your local auto body supply store.