

Wood Stains 101

	WATER-BASED	ALCOHOL-BASED	OIL-BASED	CHEMICALS
DRY TIME	3 to 4 hours	Instant	Overnight	Overnight
APPLICATION	Easy; use a rag and/or a synthetic-bristle brush.	Practice required on large surfaces. Move evenly and keep a wet edge, avoiding overlap.	Easy; use a rag and/or a synthetic-bristle brush.	Easy, but requires protection (goggles, mask, gloves). Use a rag and/or a synthetic-bristle brush.
PROS	Easy and forgiving application; compatible with almost any finish.	Good UV stability. Good with open-pore woods.	The oil medium conditions the wood. Good coverage. Does not raise grain.	Capable of faux aging and other special effects and unique results.
CONS	Raises the grain.	Fumes. Tricky on large surfaces	Long drying time. Less translucent.	Raises the grain. Dangerous!
FILLER	Alcohol- or oil-based	Water- or oil-based	Oil fillers possible; try water-based on samples before.	Oil-based
BEST FINISH	Wax, oil, or shellac	Oil or wax	Oil or alcohol	Almost any