

## **Finishing Approaches for Woodturners**

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### **Friction Polishes**

Friction polishes are an attempt to get a quick and easy French polish. They are either shellac or lacquer based and contain waxes and oils. There are several commercial friction polishes available: Shellawax, Behlens Woodturners Finish, Mylands. Russ preferred liquid Shellawax which is easy to use and creates a very high gloss finish when you follow the directions.

Techniques to get a good finish for small pieces:

1. The wood surface must be as near perfect as possible. Sand to at least 600-grit; 1500-grit is better.
2. Heat is required to make a smooth finish. High lathe speed is not required as long as there is enough pressure to generate heat. The applicator should be just below the temperature where it is too hot to hold.
3. Do not flood the surface with the finish solution, use just enough to cover the surface, and add small amounts for the next coats. Make sure the finish is dry before applying the next coat.
4. If ridges in the finish are a problem, add denatured alcohol to the applicator if the finish is shellac and lacquer thinner if the finish is lacquer.
5. Do not use an applicator that will impart a surface texture to the finish. Russ found that the best applicator is a piece of new velour towel. You can store the applicator in a small jar with just enough denatured alcohol to cover the bottom.

For large pieces: use a power sander:

- Put an 80-grit disc on a 2" sanding arbour. Then take a 5" square of the new velour towelling and place it on the sanding disk and wrap it around the arbour and hold it in place with a rubber band or tie wrap. Dampen the pad with friction polish, run the drill at half speed and work across the surface. Recharge with more friction polish when it starts to grab on the surface.

When there is a uniform coat on the wood, continue to work the pad at the same speed until the surface of the pad feels hot to the touch. Stop when there is a uniform gloss. Lift the pad off the surface before stopping the drill. Apply a small amount of the friction polish around the perimeter of the pad and repeat the application.

Russ preferred to use his own mixture:

- Equal parts of shellac, denatured alcohol, and boiled linseed oil, with a teaspoon of beeswax per ½ pint of finish. Heat the wax in the microwave before adding it to the finish. The oil will not mix with the alcohol, so you will have to keep it stirred.
- A lacquer-based friction polish can be made of equal parts of Deft gloss lacquer, lacquer thinner and boiled linseed oil.

## Products

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Product	Supplier	Recommended by / Comments
Shellawax	Lee Valley, Craft Supplies USA, Penn State Industries	
Denatured Alcohol	Industrial or scientific chemical supply companies like BSC Inc., 1456B Cyrville Rd. Ottawa	
velour towelling		

## Advice

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**By** Advice

Suggestions welcome...