

The Complete Guide To Timber Furniture Care

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW



BY CHRIS GREEN

Your complete guide to everything you need to know about timber furniture care.

Many people love wood furniture because of its natural beauty and its ability to stand the test of time.

Even though some antique varieties may need special attention, most modern wood furniture doesn't need a lot of work to maintain.

Just using the right furniture care products and following a few basic steps is all you'll need to keep your timber furniture looking great and lasting longer.

In this guide you'll discover:

- **How to extend the life of your timber furniture.**
- **Things that you may not know that could badly damage your timber furniture.**
- **How to choose the right furniture polish.**
- **How to improve the appearance of dull, tired and worn out timber furniture.**
- **How to effectively clean and polish your furniture quickly & easily.**
- **How to do minor repairs and touch ups.**
- **How to handle and move furniture without damaging it.**

Simple Tips to Extend the Life of your Timber Furniture

The Effects of Liquids, Chemicals and Hot Objects on Timber Furniture

Certain timber furniture items get regular use during daily activities in the home.

These items include dining tables, occasional tables, desks and nightstands.

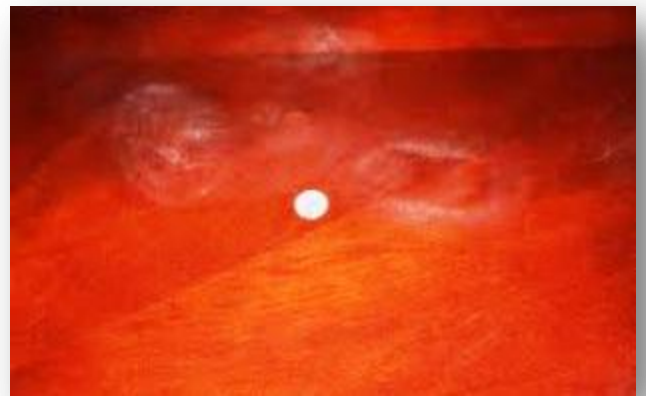
A little extra care and some common sense will go a long way in preserving your timber furniture and keeping it in good order for many years.

Finished wood furniture is most vulnerable to liquids, chemicals and hot objects. While some finishes provide extra protection, no finish is impervious to these conditions.

Quick Tip

It's best to protect timber surfaces from liquid damage by flower vases, drinking glasses, soft drink cans or any objects that hold fluid by using a coaster or some sort of protective cover.

Water Damage on Timber Table



Household chemicals and timber furniture do not mix

Many products contain acetates (very small acidic particles) that quickly penetrate and react with wood finishes.

The reaction often times results in the finish being removed.

There are certain types of finishes, like catalysed lacquers, that help prevent this but it is never a good idea to use chemicals on wood furniture.

Reactive chemicals that need to be kept away from wood furniture at all costs

Some of the most reactive chemicals that can cause extensive damage to timber furniture are found in cleaning solutions, alcohol, perfumes or aftershaves, medications and the worst of all, nail polish remover.

Acetone (nail polish remover) is a harsh solvent and tends to have ill-effects on furniture finishes. If acetone has not

Acetone Nail Polish Remover



penetrated the finish, you may be lucky by removing the marks with a mixture of toothpaste and baking soda paste.



Rub the damaged area with soft cloth in direction of wood grain. Try rubbing white spots with **“0000” superfine steel wool** and some furniture polish or wax.

✗ Do not use steel wool on high gloss finishes. Or, rub spots lightly with a paste of powdered pumice or rottenstone and linseed oil. Not all DIY methods work on all finishes. If spots cannot be removed, it usually requires refinishing.

! Do not attempt these repairs if you are unsure about what you are doing.

If in doubt always call a professional repairer.

Also, certain foods contain dyes or chemicals that can stain the finish, some of these items include mustard and wine.

Always clean spills immediately by blotting as opposed to wiping the spill to prevent further damage to your furniture's finish.

Once the spill has been cleaned and dried off with a soft cloth apply a coat of **good quality furniture polish** to help protect the surface.

**Never place hot objects or liquids on timber furniture always use placemats & coasters.
(Make sure they are not rubber backed)**

Heat is one of the biggest causes of damage to furniture!

The effects of too much heat are similar to the effects of standing water on the finish.

Heat causes the finish to expand and breaks the seal between the finish and the wood.

The result is the same, light blurry marks and heat rings in the finish that cannot be cleaned away.

The common sense rule is if an object is too hot to leave on your hand, it is too hot to be on the furniture!

Wine Spill on Table



Heat effects on Furniture



A French polisher or furniture restorer can usually repair this condition but some common sense can easily avoid the problem.

Micro waved or oven heated plates and dishes, hot beverages, hot pizza in the delivery box are all examples of items that should be kept away from your furniture's finish.

Even if hot items pass the "leave it on your hand test", a certain amount of finish is melted and transferred to the hot item. Over time, the finish is removed in high use areas.

! Give your furniture a treatment of good quality furniture wax every 3-6 months to help protect and extend the life of the finish.

Minimise Humidity Changes

Timber splits



Up to half the weight of freshly sawn wood is water. The purpose of kiln and air drying wood before it is used in any building or furniture making is to remove moisture to try to attain an Equilibrium Moisture Content i.e. the water content of the wood is equal to the moisture content of the surrounding air.

However, furniture will be moved from location to location over its life, and the wood will respond to changes in the moisture content of the new surrounding air by absorbing more moisture and expanding, or by losing moisture and shrinking.

Generally, this movement will be minor, but it may none the less be noticeable by way of separation of the wood components, particularly at corners, or by minor separation of the wood surface itself.

We recommend that changes to humidity where your furniture is located be mitigated as far as possible by the following:

- Keep well-watered plants or large water-filled vases or other containers in the room near where your furniture is located.
- Avoid direct sunlight.

Do not leave the furniture near electric and gas heaters, or near air conditioning or central heating outlets.



12 Tips to Long Lasting Timber Furniture

Proper wood furniture care is essential if you want it to last, with some good information and the right furniture care products, fine wood furniture can really last for many years.

Below are some valuable care tips and links to products that will help you to get the most life and enjoyment out of your furniture.

1. Do not place drink glasses, jugs or vases etc on the furniture's surface without a coaster or place mat to protect it.
 2. Never put hot pots, pans, dishes, cups or mugs on wood furniture, always use place mats, coasters or heat proof pads to protect the surface. Heat marks and damage can be very difficult to remove and usually require a professional restorer to repair.
 3. Always keep coasters handy to prevent water rings and heat marks.
 4. Keep wood furniture dry. If wood gets really wet for too long it can cause damage to the finish and actually warp the wood.
 5. Be sure to clean up any spills as soon as they occur. Using a blotting action rather than wiping is a better solution.
- ✗ Do not let spills dry or you could end up with a permanent stain. Take immediate action to clean up the spill. Never use sharp objects to remove spilt or dried up food.**
6. Never use any type of cover that has a rubber, plastic or vinyl backing on wood furniture, many of these materials have chemicals in them that can react with the wood's finish and cause major damage.
 7. When burning candles, it's advisable to use a felt protector with a plastic top. Candle wax will not run as much when it makes contact with plastic.

If candle wax does happen to drop onto the wood surface wait until the wax has cooled and hardened before trying to remove it.

For best results apply an ice cube onto the spilt wax until it goes hard and brittle then get an old credit card or smooth plastic spatula and gently scrape the wax off the surface.

Avoid using sharp objects to remove candle wax as you could easily damage the furniture's finish.

Once the candle wax is removed polish the area with a good quality beeswax polish and buff away any remaining residue.

8. Keep furniture out of direct sunlight. When furniture is exposed to the sun for long periods of time it's possible for the furniture to fade and age prematurely.

You may want to close the curtains or blinds during certain parts of the day to keep the direct sunlight off.

9. If possible try to avoid extreme changes in temperature. Always arrange furniture away from radiators and air conditioning units.
10. Dust your furniture regularly to keep the surface clean. Always use [pure cotton polishing cloth](#) to avoid scratching and use a good quality silicone and petro-chemical free furniture polish for excellent long term wood furniture care.
11. Never do your nails on any painted, finished or stained furniture. Nail polish and especially nail polish remover will strip the finish right down to the wood. Please don't think that putting down newspaper will eliminate the problem, it will not.

As a matter of fact the newspaper will probably glue itself to the top of the furniture creating just as big a problem as the nail polish falling straight onto the bare surface.

12. Minor scratches and dents can often be removed by using [furniture touch up products](#).

Cleaning and Polishing Wood Furniture

Regular Cleaning

Wood furniture needs to be dusted frequently with a clean, soft, dry, lint-free cloth. Clean the surface by rubbing in the direction of the grain. You should dust and polish your furniture weekly and apply a protective coating of beeswax furniture polish approximately every six months.



Choosing the right furniture polish

Furniture Polish – How to choose the right one.

With so many choices of furniture polish available on the market today how do you know which one is right for you?

There are several factors to weigh up when you're deciding which furniture polish or beeswax to use on your timber furniture and other wooden objects.

One critical factor is that the ingredients in commercial polishes and cleaning products are rarely disclosed. Moreover, these ingredients can be, and frequently are, changed without warning or notification.

These ingredients may be harmless or harmful to the furniture (and to you) and you have no way of knowing in advance.

Quick Tip

Read the label first

The first thing to look for is a furniture polish that only contains natural ingredients, always steer clear of anything that contains silicon, gum turps or petro-chemical by-products, these types of furniture polishes are most commonly found in supermarkets and hardware stores and should be avoided at all costs. Ask your furniture retailer for a recommended furniture polish. [Order online.](#)

What are the problems with these ingredients?

Let me go through them one by one and you'll see why it's best to avoid them.

Silicone and why it should be avoided

Silicone is put in furniture polish to make application easy and buffing off easy but, if you ever need to have the piece of furniture you are polishing repaired or refinished it creates all sorts of problems for the repairer.

The repairer is unable to remove the silicone residue or film that's left on the surface, which then causes the new lacquer being applied to bubble and not adhere to the surface as it is supposed to.

Long term use of silicone polishes on furniture can cause the lacquer on the surface to crack, split and break down.

Gum Turps

Gum turps is a common ingredient found in many beeswax polishes especially companies who produce old style traditional waxes.

This is an ingredient that is commonly used to keep the beeswax polish soft while still in the can and to make the wax dry when it's applied to the furniture's surface.

The main problems associated with gum turps are: Toxicity, skin irritations and generally poor results.

Gum turps in wax makes it hard to apply and hard to remove and will always leave an oily, smeary finish.

Petro-Chemicals and Tolulene

These ingredients are most commonly found in aerosol furniture polishes and oils, and as with gum turps they can create toxic fumes, skin irritations and give poor results.

! Important Note:

Oil Based Furniture Polishes tend to attract dust rather than repel it. If you've ever used these types of furniture polish you might have noticed that a couple of days after you've polished your furniture it looks like you hadn't even done it.

The reason that happens is when the dust settles on the surface again it impregnates itself into the oily residue that's left behind after polishing.

Always look for a [chemical free Furniture Polish](#) or Beeswax Polish that leaves a fresh, smooth, smear free finish.

Carnauba Wax

Carnauba wax is sometimes found in beeswax polishes but only use a polish that contains this ingredient if you are trying to get a high gloss finish on raw wood, it is not overly useful on lacquered finishes as it can make a satin finish very patchy with shiny spots all over it.

Most furniture restorers and repairers recommend using a [good quality beeswax furniture polish](#) for the proper care of wood furniture.

How To Wax Timber Furniture

Waxing and Buffing

Get a good quality silicone free furniture wax with a [soft cotton polishing cloth](#), and rub in a small amount of wax using the circular motion, finishing with the grain.

Keep rubbing the wax over the surface to make sure that it has spread in a thin even layer.

If your using a paste wax the motto is "two thin layers are better than one thick layer," then wait until the wax has dried. It will make a squeaking sound when you rub your finger on the surface.

Do sections at a time and work all the surface legs, sides, tops and doors before you start to buff using a clean wax free cotton cloth. By cross grain buffing you will create a lovely lustre to the finished surface.

If you're using a liquid wax polish or a [furniture oil](#), apply the oil with a soft cloth in circular motion going with the grain. Use a second cloth to remove excess and buff to a shine.

Minor Repairs & Touch Ups

Minor damage to wood furniture like surface scratches and dents can occur with normal use. Many furniture stores carry touch up products like [filler sticks](#) and [scratch fix pens](#) that make minor repairs simple.

More complex repair or refinishing jobs are best left to professionals. If you do decide to try these repairs, always test an inconspicuous area of the furniture first to make certain the repair procedure won't damage the finish.



[Scratch Fix Pens](#), also known as Furniture Touch up Pens, are the easiest and most simple product to use for fixing minor nicks or scratches. They contain a quick drying oil based stain and you just apply the colour to the damaged area and wipe of excess stain with a cloth, apply a second coat if necessary.

Follow the instructions and you won't go too far wrong.

! **Handy Tip:** When using your Scratch Fix Pens always start with a colour that is as closely matched to your furniture as possible.

! A good rule of thumb is to start lighter and work up to darker if the exact colour is unavailable.

! Apply one coat and check the result, if it's not dark enough then give it a second coat.

If it's still not dark enough move onto a darker colour pen.



Removing paper stuck to wood furniture

Do not try to scrape the paper off. Dab some linseed or [orange oil](#) on the paper.

Let the oil soak for a bit, and then remove the paper by rubbing it with your fingers.

Give the area a coat of good quality furniture polish to finish off.



Handling & Moving Furniture

! Before you move a piece of furniture, examine it for loose or damaged joinery.

Never slide or drag furniture along the floor, especially tables. The vibration can loosen or break joints, chip feet, break legs, etc., to say nothing of what dragging does to the carpeting or the finish on the floor.

Wrong way to move Furniture



these points.

Then examine the room and the route whereby the furniture is to be moved. Look around to make sure you know where everything is. Identify potential trouble. Light fixtures that hang low, or items that extend out from a wall may be damaged or cause damage.

Glass table tops are also easily damaged if bumped. If necessary, clear the way by moving or removing fragile or obstructive items. Protect the furniture to be moved

If you have carpet, tile or wood floors always use [furniture movers or gliders](#) to avoid damaging your floors and the furniture when moving it.

Never slide heavy furniture over wood, tiled or laminated floors!

Before picking up a piece of furniture, determine how it is put together and if any of its parts are removable or detachable. Make sure you know where the furniture is its strongest - generally along a major horizontal element - and try to carry it from

with soft padding or wrap it in a blanket pad. Padding, which will provide extra insurance against bumping and gouging, is especially important if an item is going into storage.

Never hurry when you are moving furniture. Scratches, dents, and gouges from bumps against hand truck, doorways, and other furniture are always more likely in haste.

Each item needs to be approached individually, without haste, and with sufficient manpower present.

Make sure you have a firm grip on the piece with both hands. Do not wear cotton gloves. It is essential that your hands don't slip from a piece of furniture while it is being moved.

Moving Tables

The strongest part of a table is generally the apron. Whenever possible, lift the table carefully from the apron, never by the top or legs.

Lifting on the top rather than the apron may break the glue-blocks that hold the top to the frame or strip out the screws that hold the top on.



Grabbing the legs, particularly tables with long, unsupported legs, will cause unnecessary stress on the leg and the joint connecting it to the apron.

If you are moving a drop-leaf table, first determine which support members move. Is the table leaf supported by a bracket or by a swing-leg?

Fold the leaves down, and restrain them with padding and a tie band. If the support is provided by a swing-leg or gate-leg, tie it in place as well.

- ! **The only safe place to grab a drop-leaf table is underneath the end aprons. Grabbing by the legs, especially swing-legs, will increase the chance of damage to them, and grabbing the table by the side leaves will often result in fracturing the long rule joint that allows the leaves to drop.**
- ! **Chairs should be lifted by the seat rails and not by the arms or crest rail.**
- ! **Never grab a heavy piece like a chest of drawers or bookcase by the cornice at the top. The attachment of the top to the base may be loosened and pull apart from the rest of the piece.**

Lift the piece straight up, using your legs, not your back. Don't let it tilt, and do not grab it by its hardware or any other protrusions.

Handling valuable furnishings requires a special attitude: in general, movement should be carried out at a slower pace.

Moving Large Clocks

Moving projects become increasingly difficult with objects that are large and complex. Objects that come apart into many pieces or are unwieldy require extra care and preparation. Because of their many parts grandfather and grandmother clocks are very difficult to move.

Always remove the pendulum and weights from within the clock before doing anything else. These pieces are heavy and will damage the clock case if they smash into the side of the case.

They may also cause damage to the mechanism itself. Wear cotton gloves when you remove the pendulum and weights, to avoid corroding the metal pieces from skin contact.

Remove the hood from the top of the clock (they often slide forward), and lay it down to pack and move separately. Make sure the door to the case is locked or securely closed before moving the clock. Use bare hands, not gloves, for moving and packing the carcass of the case.

For short moves, like those of only a few feet, it is permissible to lift by grabbing the narrow case from the underside of the moulding at the top of the waist, or centre portion of the case, provided that the moulding is firmly attached to the case itself. For longer moves, or if that moulding is not secure, the clock case should be carried flat like a coffin.

Summary:

Here are some quick tips for moving furniture properly.

Remember: If you don't break it, it doesn't have to be fixed!

1. Anticipate problems trouble.
2. Think through every step.
3. Plan ahead.



4. Make sure you have the strength to handle the weight of the furniture so you don't drop it or injure yourself
5. Do everything with care.
6. Make sure the route is clear and has no obstructions.
7. Measure narrow doorways to make sure the furniture will fit through.
8. Remove furniture feet or legs if possible if access is tight.
9. Remove lamps and ornaments or hanging pictures and chandeliers that might hinder the safe passage of the furniture being moved.
10. Take shelves out or any items that could come adrift whilst moving.

Once you have made sure that it's safe to move, remove elements such as shelves, doors, and drawers. If doors cannot be removed, secure them by locking or wrapping the case with soft cotton straps.

Resources

About the Author

Chris Green the owner of Furniture Care Products has been involved in the furniture industry since 1980 in a number of areas including 20 years Furniture Transport & Logistics, 20 years in selling furniture care and floor care products as well as upholstery cleaning, fabric protection application and leather cleaning.

During his time in the furniture transport business he discovered that customers were having a hard time getting the right advice the right care products to look after their new furniture.

In 1998 Chris started Superior Furniture Care and built the business by sourcing a range of premium quality timber furniture care and repair products. Over time the range expanded to leather care, fabric care, floor protection and floor care products.

In 2013 the business was split into two separate businesses. Aussie Furniture Care for the product range and Superior Furniture Care for the fabric protection, upholstery cleaning & leather cleaning services.

With his knowledge and experience Chris has been able to build up a range of top quality products that he has personally used and tested. No products are added to the range unless they adhere to a strict criteria.

All products must do what they say they will do, they must be safe, environmentally friendly and must produce excellent results for customers.

Every product in all ranges come with a 100% Money Back Guarantee

The [Furniture Care Products](#) website was created in 2005 and since then Chris has also written 6 ebooks available for Free download on the site as well as numerous how to videos which are also available to view on this site.

Resources

[Furniture Polish](#)

[Furniture Oils](#)

[Furniture Polishing Cloths](#)

[Furniture Repair & Touch Up Products](#)