

Scuffing between coats is a good idea as it improves inter-coat adhesion even though nitrocellulose lacquer will typically bond without it. Scuffing also removes imperfections that will telegraph through the finish if left alone. We recommend steared (dry lube) 320 grit sand paper between coats but wet sanding can be done if preferred using 400 grit waterproof sand paper.

It's common to stack a series of lacquer coats to fill grain which are then sanded back aggressively to remove the majority of the finish thickness above the grain. The process is repeated till the finish come flush and the grain is filled. In this process it may not be important to scuff sand as the finish is typically removed above the surface of the wood.

Lacquer dries quickly to the touch and can be handled soon after but the film will remain soft for a while as the slower solvents continue to come out of the coating. The lacquer will sand best when fully dry but we rarely wait that long to continue our finish. Scuff sanding between coats can be done within an hour or two depending on conditions. After stacking a series of coats that you intend to grind back you may wait overnight or longer for better sanding qualities.

Filling grain with clear coat is common on instruments but using a grain filler is better to eliminate the labor, wasted material and excess shrinkage as the coating continues to dry. If heavy grain is filled with lacquer in this manner you will have to wait longer for all the shrinkage to take place as the coating dries and contracts. Cutting the finish too soon will result in a flat finish that later starts to show dimples over the grain as it continues to shrink. There are several variable you have to consider. The overall thickness of the coating, the depth of the grain and your drying conditions. On average most wait 3 to 4 weeks before attempting a rub out when filling grain with lacquer alone. This time can be reduced by drying the instrument in a room or oven that can maintain 120 degrees with some air circulation. One week in these conditions should be sufficient.

The cut is done with a waterproof sand paper and a sanding block to ensure a perfectly flat surface plane. Choose the grit that is required to handle your worst flaw. Ideally I would like to start no coarser than 800 grit and would prefer 1000 or finer but use the one that makes the job easier. You will have to use progressively finer papers to thoroughly remove the previous papers scratch pattern before stepping up in grit. I'd recommend sanding up to 1500 – 2000 grit before moving to a rubbing compound. Remember the lower you start the more steps it will take. If I felt like I'd needed a grit more coarse than 800 I'd would have sanded the finish smooth and applied another coat of lacquer till I achieved a coat that would be within this range.

The first grit used is the cut step in a cut and rub. Everything beyond that is part of the rub out. The cut introduces sanding scratches and everything we do from that point is to remove them. Once we sand to a fine enough grit that we can remove with a compound we switch and continue to polish to a full gloss. Rottenstone is a good abrasive as it starts a bit aggressive and breaks down to produce a high gloss. It could be an excellent choice if that is what you're used to. A rubbing compound is similar but we've done the work to put your abrasive into solution to be ready to use. I'd recommend a fine rubbing compound like Behlen's Buffer's Polish for the average finisher since it's neat and easy.

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