

Frequently Asked Questions

October, 2003

The Benefits of Dry and Wet Sanding - Dry Sanding :

1. Apply 10 coats of lacquer and let it cure for at least 48 hours before sanding. Always use a sanding block with the paper on the cushioned side. Gently sand the image only with 320 grit (280 grit for water based lacquer).
2. Apply a further 10 coats then sand all over with 320 grit being careful not to go through to the paper. Then sand gently with 400 grit to remove any scratch marks.
3. Apply a further 5 coats this time sanding with 400 grit followed by 600 grit.
4. Apply a further 5 coats this time use a 600 grit followed by 800 grit.
5. If necessary apply further coats and sand as before. It will depend on the thickness of your cut out as to how many coats are needed to bring the surface level.
6. After the final sand and the surface is absolutely level it will have the appearance of moiré taffeta.
7. Apply 3 final coats.
8. Using the medium grit of the 3 foam backed pads, sand until the surface is smooth to touch and perfectly level. Don't take off the last layer or you will have to start again. This stage is really only polishing.
9. Repeat using the finest grit pad, polishing it to a gloss finish. If you are happy with this look stop here and polish the piece with Goddards Cabinet makers furniture polish, available in Supermarkets.
10. Alternatively, you can now micro mesh the piece to a brilliantly smooth finish.

Wet Sanding :

1. Follow the above instructions but use wet and dry sandpaper and plenty of water. Remove all the milky residue frequently as you proceed with a tissue or sponge cloth.
2. For the final sand, use no. 0000 steel wool (dry) very lightly. Follow this with micro mesh.

(Wet sanding is recommended for those who suffer from dust allergy).

September, 2003

Q What is the best way to decoupage a coloured image that I print from my desk jet at home? The colour always smudges.

A *Unfortunately the inks on computer produced printing are not always colour-fast and may smudge when either a water or spirit based lacquer or sealer is applied. You might try spraying on a coat (or two) of artist's fixative to set the image. If this fails and your images still run then the solution is to use a photocopy of the computer produced image. Remember to always seal the image with Gloss Medium and Varnish or White Polish (clear shellac) before applying coats of lacquer. Bear in mind that colour photocopy paper is thicker than normal xerox type paper and you will need quite a few additional coats of lacquer to bury the image.*

Q I am about to decoupage an ostrich egg, cutting the images to conform to the curve of the egg. How do I disguise the cuts in the paper to ensure that white edges do not spoil my work.

A *I presume you are referring to the edges of the image once it has been glued in place. You will need to take a 00 paintbrush and carefully paint the white edges the same colour as the background. After 10 or so coats of lacquer the edges will no longer be visible. A similar procedure applies to disguise the edges of the incisions you need to make to enable your image to fit the contour of the egg.*

Q I am making a set of table mats using family colour photographs. Are there any precautions I need to take with photographs?

A *I suggest you have the photographs photocopied as a reaction can occur between the chemicals on the photo surface and the finishing lacquer. This may not appear for a year or so but it is shattering to see your carefully prepared images fade to a sickly yellow.*

Q What is the Estapol referred to in Val Lade's book on decoupage? My local art and craft suppliers do not know the product.

A *Estapol is the trade name of an oil based varnish produced in Australia. Like any oil based varnish it produces a pleasing mellow aged effect as more coats are applied. This is particularly useful when producing an 'antique' or 'period' style item of decoupage. Any good quality oil based varnish will produce the same effect. If you want to avoid the 'mellowing' use water based varnish for your project.*