

Technical Tip

The Importance of Using Quality Brushes

One of the greatest mistakes you can make when applying a new finish to your home is to use inexpensive paint or stain brushes. You will be putting a lot of time, money and effort into your project and saving a few dollars by using cheap brushes can compromise the beauty and performance of your new finish!

When applying water-based finishes like LIFELINE use brushes made from synthetic nylon/polyester or blends of bristle and polyester. Ever since the industry started moving away from oil-based coatings brush manufacturers have designed brushes specifically made for the application of water-based stains and clear coats. These type brushes are durable so they're great for staining rough surfaces and they maintain their stiffness when exposed to water. Plus they are easy to clean. You don't want to use a 100% natural bristle brush for applying a water-based coating because like hair, natural bristles absorb water and you'll end up with a limp brush that won't work very well. Also, rough surfaces will quickly wear out a pure bristle brush. Since transparent stains are typically much less viscous than paints, if you use a normal paint brush the brush won't hold much product and you'll end up having to constantly dip the brush after just a few strokes.



Some Features of Quality Brushes

Bristle Quality – As previously stated, choose brushes with bristles made specifically for applying water-based stains. Using less expensive all purpose brushes will result in drips, runs and other defects in the finish.

Bristle Retention – There is probably nothing more exasperating than trying to pick loose bristles off of a surface that you just finished. If the finish has dried it becomes virtually impossible to remove them without removing some of the finish too.

Ergonomics – The brush will be in your hand for several hours at a time. An ill designed handle will quickly become uncomfortable to hold and work with.

Threaded Handle – Some high quality brushes come with a removable treaded handle that can be removed and replaced with an extension pole. This comes in handy when working on high, hard to reach areas.

Choose the Correct Brush for the Job

Use the largest brush suitable for the surface you are coating. You'll probably need small brushes for narrow surfaces like frames and trim but when coating logs and siding larger brushes carry more finish so there will be less dipping to refill the brush and fewer strokes to cover the surface. Larger brushes also do a better job when back-brushing a surface that has had a finish applied with an airless sprayer.

Properly Using Your Brush

Never press too hard on your brush. Stains and topcoats should be applied with the tips of the brush, not the sides. Don't try to load too much finish on your brush. A heavily loaded brush will result in more drips and runs. If your brush becomes messy don't be afraid to stop and occasionally wash it out. One of the advantages of using quality brushes is that they can be repeatedly washed without harming the brush. One tool that you may want to consider purchasing is a brush and roller spinner/dryer. It will quickly spin most of the water out of a brush after washing.

Examples of Brush / Roller Spinners



Care and Maintenance

If properly cleaned and maintained a good quality brush will give you many years of good service. If you take a break even for just a few minutes, rinse your brush out with clean water and shake out the water. If you are through for the day, thoroughly wash your brush with a mild soap or detergent, shake or spin the water out and return the brush back into its original storage sleeve. Don't just throw it into your tool box. You don't want to pick up any contamination like small particles of steel and the sleeve will help retain the brush's shape while it dries.