

Your deck is a rustic, natural addition to your home. No matter what wood you've chosen for construction (redwood, cedar, pressure-treated* pine or fir -- or exotic hardwoods), all decks need protection from the damaging effects of moisture and the sun.

The appearance of your deck's new wood will change over time. Don't expect the uniform look of a newly constructed deck to last indefinitely. Varying degrees of exposure to ultra violet rays from the sun, water and heavy foot traffic patterns will alter the appearance of all wood. Protecting your deck with a quality finish will lessen the negative effects of these elements and keep your deck's surface looking its best for years to come.

1. Allow new decks to weather 4-6 weeks. To provide adequate protection, the stain or clear finish must penetrate the pores of the wood and not be allowed to puddle or dry onto the surface of the deck. Wood grains can be very tight as a result of the milling process. Natural weathering wears down the "mill glaze" and opens the pores of the wood allowing proper penetration of the finish. A good way to test if wood is ready to be coated is to sprinkle a few drops of water on it. If the water is absorbed into the wood the substrate is ready for coating. If the water beads up, allow more weathering. If you desire to finish the surface sooner, lightly sand to remove the mill glaze and use a deck cleaner. (Pressure-treated lumber needs to dry out 4-6 weeks before applying a finish). Previously coated decks. If your deck's wood appears to have been coated and no grain is showing, it has probably been painted or stained with a solid coating. This product needs to be removed and the deck cleaned to bring back the bare wood and grain.

2. All surfaces must be clean and dry. On older decks, use of a cleaner or wood restorer may be necessary. If mildew is present, use a deck cleaner to kill it and at the same time clean the deck. Hirshfield's recommends using the cleaner specified by the brand of deck finish you will be using. Note: before applying the deck finish, the wood must be completely dry. Temperature and humidity affect drying time. Two (2) or more days may be necessary.

3. Use a quality, oil-based deck stain. Hirshfield's offers quality deck care products including: Storm Stains, ProLuxe Sikkens, Cabot

Ready Seal, ABR X-100 and Benjamin Moore. These products provide varying degrees of UV protection as well as offers a wide selection of colors. Never use solid siding stain or paint on a deck. In this application, these will usually peel. There are, however, solid deck stains that will perform better. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on the label or other product specific literature.

4. Do not apply stain in direct sunlight. If possible, work during shaded hours.

5. Apply the deck finish product with a deck staining brush or painting pad. Apply just enough of the product to satisfy the porosity. Back brush to work into the grain and remove any excess puddles of product that still appear shiny after approximately 10 minutes.

6. Try to maintain a wet edge by staining only a few boards at a time. Avoid lap marks by applying a continuous wet film of stain.

7. Let stain dry thoroughly before using deck. Allow 12-24 hours depending on temperature and humidity.

8. Plan on periodic maintenance. Most decks, depending on use and exposure, will need cleaning and re-staining every year or two to maintain their beauty.

9. Call the Experts at Hirshfield's! If you have questions with any portion of the project they will give you all the information you need to successfully complete your job with pride.

***Pre-treated or green-treated wood needs protection, as well.** Though highly resistant to rot and insect damage, pressure-treated lumber becomes increasingly susceptible to water damage as it ages. This type of wood readily absorbs moisture, leading to warping and splitting if left unprotected. *Ask a Hirshfield's Deck Care Expert to recommend a product to keep your green or pretreated looking good for years to come.*

Staining older decks: If your wood has weathered to a silver-gray color, it must be restored to a clean, clear wood color before applying stains or clear wood finishes. Sanding, power washing and using products specifically formulated to correct this situation is absolutely necessary.

The above are general guidelines. Consult specific product instructions for proper application and safe handling.