POLYVINE®
TRADE VARNISH EXPERTS

The Process of Water based Varnish Drying

Varnish DRY happens when the water evaporates from your varnish coating leaving the surface feeling dry to the touch.

Paint CURE happens when your paint coating has reached its maximum hardness

When reading the label on your varnish container, it will tell you the DRY time, not the CURE time.

Dry Time for the First Coat

Thickness and application of your varnish can directly affect how long it takes to dry. Your dry time will also vary greatly depending on how you choose to coat your substrate. For the initial drying time, it usually takes 30 to 90 minutes to be dry to the touch. Paint drying time depends on the type of varnish, thickness of application and application method.

There is much more varnish applied when using a paint brush. A varnish brush applies the film at the right thickness.

Adding a Second Coat

After your first coat of paint is dry to the touch, it is safe to recoat typically after three to four hours. A good rule of thumb is to wait at least three hours to recoat, if it is water-based. If you are unsure, the instructions on the label can give you the best final say.

Curing Time

The time it takes for varnish to harden completely so that it resists scratching, is called curing.

However, having it dry enough to wash, withstand abrasion or application of other coatings will depend on temperature and humidity and thickness of varnish. Cross linked varnishes cure faster than uncrosslinked varnishes, and polyurethanes cures faster than acrylics.

We recommend giving 7 to 10 days for acrylics, depending on the humidity and temperature in the room. Polyvine crosslinked polyurethanes cure in 16 hours. Wait for your substrate to cure before attempting to apply other coatings.

Factors That Affect Drying Times

Temperature

Varnishing during the spring or autumn is ideal because the temperatures are not too hot or cold. If you are varnishing in a chilly room, expect increased drying times. The best temperature to varnish is a warm room with low humidity.

Varnish will appear dry before it actually is, which typically happens when a second coat is applied before the first one is totally dry. It is important to get this right.

by Peter Wells, Polyvine Technical Director.