

How We Finish Nantucket Baskets

Handmade North Carolina Baskets - 2016



Finishing your new Nantucket basket will both beautify and protect the basket. The process is really very simple, but will require some time invested on your part. We hope the following tips and techniques will help you get the most enjoyment from your Nantucket Basket.

1. **At This Point:** The basket should be completely woven, with the rims on with the handles & knobs attached. An exception would be if you have any scrimmed ivory or bones components. You want to be careful not to get any polyurethane on the scrimms, as it may cause the ink to smear. In that case, leave them off or plan to cover them with masking tape.
2. **Tidy-Up The Basket:** Snip off any stray strands from weavers and staves.

3. **Do The Final Sanding Of Any Wood Parts:** The best wood finish can be achieved by sanding through a progression of sandpaper grits. Start around 100 grit if there are any obvious tool marks or indentations to be removed.. Work progressively from coarser to finer grained paper; 200-400-600, for instance. Always sand in the direction of the grain as this will reduce cross-grain scratches. The time you invest in sanding the bases, rims, handles and lids will reward you richly when the finish is complete. Notes - Do Not sand the inside edge of a slip-on rim until it is glued onto the basket. Rims are delicate and edges can snap and break with little pressure. And, of course, traditional rims should be final-sanded before lashing.
4. **Apply The Finish:** *** When using Polyurethane or Tung Oil Finish, always work in a clean, well ventilated area.*** Any high-quality brand of polyurethane will do. We use Minwax Clear Satin Polyurethane at Handmade NC Baskets. This provides protection with a slightly subdued, subtle lustre. If you prefer a more shiny finish, use a clear-gloss polyurethane product. We recommend you apply at least 4-6 coats. However, 7-8 coats (or even more!) will result in exquisite depth and beauty. In addition to a beautiful look, the finish will also seal and protect the cane and wood, and will lock together the weavers and staves, providing strength. Apply each coat with a bristle brush, then wipe lightly with clean paper towels to absorb excess and prevent drips. Do Not Use a sponge brush, as this may result in bubbles in the finish. Allow the basket to dry completely after each coat. Sand lightly before the 2nd and 3rd coats to knock down any grain raised by the polyurethane. After several years, you can freshen the finish with coat or two of the same brand and style of polyurethane.
5. **Finishes That We Use:** For many years, we only recommended MinWax Clear Satin Polyurethane. This works very well, and we have used it successfully for many years. Also, many of our weavers have had success with General Gel Polyurethane. This product also works very well, however, we only recommend it for use on wood. If used on the cane and staves, it can build up in between the cane and is unsightly. The same precaution should be noted for the Clear Satin liquid polyurethane. Care must be used when applying multiple coats, when wiping off excess polyurethane, in order to prevent buildup in crevices. Since about 2015, we have also been using Minwax Tung Oil Finish. Apply and use this product exactly the same as polyurethane. The two main differences are that Tung Oil Finish takes a little longer to dry, and appears to soak into the cane and wood more thoroughly than polyurethane, leaving less chance of buildup between weavers and staves.
6. **That's It!** We hope this guide helps you get the most enjoyment from your new Nantucket Basket.

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