

## PYROGRAPHY BASICS

This kit has been put together with information, tips and ideas as a reference guide for pyrographers who are new to the craft or don't have access to information.

Rather than trying to re-write particular information, I have included photocopies of out of several pyrography books from leading authors as well as black and white pictures that can be used for future pyrography projects. Individual pyrographers use a variety of techniques to achieve their unique pyrography effect but the basics are all the same.

So, my initial question I ask myself whenever I am wanting to create with pyrography is 'what am I trying to achieve?'. One of the greatest hurdles I find for people is the availability of suitable designs as not everyone is able to draw or design without copying. When I first started, I didn't have access to the internet or a computer and did most of my designing using a photocopier and tracing paper. These days it is different as I can resize images on the computer to the actual project piece and finding images is a lot easier with the internet. Any image or photo can be used for pyro it's just deciding what will work best.

Pyrographing bowls or rounded objects require a bit of freehand skill as the transferring with graphite method isn't really possible. However, if you know the general idea of what you want, anything is possible!

Happy pyrography!

## The Basic Steps

1. Select and sand timber. NB: From 80 up to 400 grit at least. The better the sanding, the better the pyrography result.
2. Create photocopy of image to size of timber
3. Cut photocopy to fit inside timber size. Eg. Remove excess blank paper
4. Sticky tape image along one edge to timber. NB. Ensure image can be lifted to check transfer but is also secure enough not to change placement.
5. Place **graphite** paper the right way in between image and timber. **NEVER USE CARBON PAPER TO TRANFER IMAGES.** It uses ink for transferring and **stains** the timber and therefore cannot be sanded or erased **EVER!**
6. Use a pen, pencil or stylus to draw over all lines of the image. NB. Check to make sure image is transferred on to timber and not on to back of the image.
7. When as many lines as possible have been transferred, pyrograph a **very light** line over all transferred lines. NB It is wise to leave image stuck to timber for as long as possible to ensure lines that are accidentally removed can be transferred a second time.
9. Use an eraser or very fine sandpaper to remove any graphite lines and make sure all lines have been pyrographed.
10. Keep working on shading and light sanding in-between burns until piece is completed. Don't forget to sign your work.
11. Seal with water based polyurethane or other suitable sealer. Note: Oils, some waxes and sealers can darken timber more than is sometime desirable.
12. Stand back and congratulate yourself on your completed pyrography project!

## Pyrography methods

### **Shading**

There are a few different ways in creating light to dark shading on a piece. They are:

- Light to dark. This involves burning the lightest areas first and gradually moving towards the dark areas. This is useful if the timber is overly hard or soft.
- Dark to light. Same as above but in reverse. Most pyrography works best in this style.
- Burning a light layer over all the areas needing shading and then adding darker individual layers.

I use a combination of these methods depending on what I am pyrographing and will often start one way and change to another depending on the individual project. I always sand my pieces in between burns to add which softens outlines and removes graphite. It also can help with depth and layering.

### **Mistakes**

It is true that making a mistake with pyrography can be a hard thing to undo but there is always something that can be done.

If the piece is flat, it is possible to sand back the whole thing and start again. Another technique recently discovered is using a Stanley type blade to flat scrape away the surface of the area. If the area of the mistake is a deep burn, no matter what the timber, sanding or carving it out will create hole which will be of different depth to the rest of the timber. That is why I always say that **it is easier to sand back a light burn than a hard one** and this is the primary reason why I layer my pyrography with lighter burns.

## Finishing

Oils tend to darken timber and therefore reduce the contrast between pyrography and the wood. Sometimes this effect is wanted and the lighter the timber, the less the darkening effect. Shellac also darkens the timber but not as much as oils and even carnuba or beeswax will darken slightly. Because most pyrography is not usually an outside art, a sealer is only needed as a protectant from sticky fingers, dust or stains. Simple clear sealers for acrylic painting are simple and suitable and spray clear gloss enamel works well too. Acrylic sealers can be applied with a brush but can be watered down and applied in layers to prevent brush marks. Polyurethane sealers are very hard wearing and are suitable for anything that will need protection from contact but can be fairly toxic and have a long drying time. The newer water based polyurethanes are just as good but can be applied indoors, have a short drying time and don't have no effect on timber colour. For exterior uses, a sealer with a uv are needed as the pyrography will fade in the sun and marine sealers are usually the best as they are able to withstand most outdoor conditions. It is also best to place interior artwork away from direct sunlight again for this reason.

The essential basics of pyrography are practice, practice, practice. Getting the feel for the tool and using it on different timbers will help to build confidence in any project you choose pyrograph and I am always just an email or phone call away if you really get stuck!

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