



How To Series

Preparing to Paint

Once you have removed the finish, you'll now need to go through various grades of abrasive paper to get the instrument ready for refinishing.

The common belief that "rubbing down" is the donkey work couldn't be further from the truth. Preparation is the most important stage of refinishing – no matter how good your paintwork is, if your preparation is poor the finish will not look good!

Sanding Flat Surfaces

Depending on how cleanly the previous finish came off you should start with 100 to 150 grit paper. Using a flat block or orbital sander, sand the flat surfaces evenly until all scraper marks are removed. Using a good quality abrasive paper will mean less clogging and applying firm but light pressure will allow the paper to "cut" efficiently.

You must sand evenly as any unevenness in the sanding will cause problems when polishing, so it's advisable to check your surfaces regularly for flatness with a straight edge and set square.

If you are struggling to keep the surfaces flat, you could try using a longer and wider block - obviously checking that the block is also flat.

Sanding Edges

Sand the edges using a flat block where possible, for more awkward areas you can use various sizes of tube with abrasive paper wrapped around.

Using a soft block made of hard sponge/foam/polystyrene you can sand in the radius, again, ensure you keep the radius even.

Move through the grades

You can repeat this process with 240 grit which is fine enough for base coats and sanding sealer, some timbers like maple may require finer paper to remove all scratches.

If applying a water based stain directly onto the timber repeat the sanding process again using 500 grit paper prior to staining.

Binding, Purfling and Rosettes

More traditional instruments which have rosettes or multi layered wood binding may require fine scraping with a flat blade/cabinet scraper after sanding to stop any colour bleed from one wood type to another.

Oily Timbers

If you are preparing a newly made instrument which has certain rosewoods or oily timbers, you may find it beneficial to wash with acetone to reduce the amount of pitch in the grain. This will reduce the risk of non-adhesion when you start applying the finish.

Taking Care pays Dividends!

Great care must be taken not to mis-shape the instrument. If you dish the flat areas, over or under sand radiuses or knock areas out of shape you will greatly increase the risk of rubbing through your finish when preparing between coats or polishing.

When polished, all flaws in the preparation will be much more visible, so get it right before you start to spray.