

Using the Paint

Chalk Paint™ decorative paint can be used on almost any surface, indoors and out, without the need to prime or prepare - simply clean and paint! Furniture has a history and most times simply cleaning and dusting off the surface will do, but some pieces of furniture will require an additional step or two.

When to Sand

There will be times when you will need to sand your furniture in order to make it ready for painting:

- Use fine grade sandpaper to get rid of loose paint and other surface debris
- Use a slightly courser grade sandpaper to break the surface tension of shiny or glossy surfaces (this can include melamine and laminates)
- To remove rust, sand the surface with very fine sandpaper. Wash the surface with soap and water, rinse well, and quickly and thoroughly dry the surface (a hairdryer is useful). Use a metal primer to seal

When to Apply Clear Shellac or Knotting Solution

Shellac functions as a tough natural primer, sanding sealant, tannin-blocker, and high-gloss varnish. It is derived from the resin secreted by the female lac bug on trees found in the forests of India and Thailand. Two good brands are Rustin and International. It can be used for the following purposes:

- Use one or two coats to prevent any tannins within knot holes or open grain from bleeding through
- With some pieces of furniture, typically pieces from the 1930s and 1940s, after painting the first coat of paint there is either a yellow or pink stain that bleeds through the paint. No matter how many coats you apply the stain colour will continue to bleed through. Use a coat of shellac to block these bleeding stains (no need to remove the layer of paint)
- Shellac performs best when applied with a rag, brush, or simply wiped on with a cloth pad. It dries in minutes and you can get on with your painting. You can apply shellac over Chalk Paint. Your brushes will clean up with household ammonia

Core Techniques

The following techniques are found throughout Annie's most recent books, **CREATING THE FRENCH LOOK** and **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, and they serve as the basis for almost all of her techniques for painting with Chalk Paint.

Using a Single Colour



Chalk Paint was created because Annie Sloan wanted a paint that was flexible and easy to work with and she wanted to be able to use it in a variety of ways - from right out of the tin to thicker or thinner, and create finishes from smooth to heavily textured. Using a single colour can truly showcase the versatility of this remarkable paint.

Simple Finish Use a single colour when a simple finish is desired, or when you want some interesting details on your piece of furniture to be easily visible with no distractions. Simply paint with just one colour of Chalk Paint, apply a coat of wax, and then lightly sand to accentuate the details. Apply one or two coats, as needed, for coverage. If you are painting over a very dark surface with a light paint, three coats may be necessary. Use a stippling movement with the brush to make certain all the grooves, ruts, and indents are covered. To add dimension to an otherwise plain surface, paint all over unevenly, making brush marks in all directions.

A simple application of Chalk Paint can also be used as a base for decoupage, gilding, stencilling, printing, and hand painting (see “Embellishments” at the end of this section).



Smooth Use this technique for a more modern, sophisticated finish with little or no distressing. This technique presents the opportunity to use a clean contemporary Chalk Paint colour rather than an antique or traditional one.

For best results begin with a smooth surface. Sand your piece first with fine grade sandpaper, concentrating on corners and edges. Be sure to remove any sanding dust. The Chalk Paint should be applied smoothly and evenly, with a flat ended brush, working the brush in the direction of the grain of wood. The paint should flow out smoothly; dilute or dip the end of your brush into water and then into the paint. Depending on your choice of colour and how much you have thinned the paint, two or three coats will likely be necessary. Florence, Provence, Emile, Paloma, Pure White, and Barcelona Orange are excellent colour choices for this technique.

A smooth application can be finished with Clear Soft Wax. For a higher, more contemporary sheen, polish the next day with a soft cloth. An alternative to waxing is to simply buff the dried paint using a fine grade sandpaper, creating a beautiful soft patina.



Textured You can use a **rustic** technique when you want to get a heavy, textured, darkened look that simulates very worn, very distressed layers of paint. Try to give your paintwork as much texture as you can by applying it thickly and unevenly. Use a large brush to apply one or two coats of Chalk Paint, “laying” the paint on to make brush marks and texture in varying directions. You don’t need to completely cover your surface; it’s okay to leave gaps in the coverage if the underlying finish or wood showing through can work as part of the finish. Allow the paint to set for a few minutes, and then use your brush to lightly drag over the paint to create some additional texture. Once completely dry, apply first a coat of Clear Soft Wax, rub in and then Dark Soft Wax, working in small manageable areas. Wipe off excess Dark Wax. Sand select areas with coarse sandpaper, and repeat the application of the dark wax because you will have removed some of the wax and paint with the sandpaper and the bare wood may need to be darkened.

When choosing the paint colour for a rustic technique, remember that it is a good idea to select a brighter colour than you want to end up with because it will eventually be toned down when the dark wax is applied. Florence, Antibes Green, Greek Blue, Provence, and Barcelona Orange are particularly good choices for this technique.

Chalk Paint can be thickened for an **impasto** technique that you can use to add physical texture or dimension to a piece of furniture. This technique does need a little forward planning - make sure you have prepared the thickened paint in advance or, alternatively, this is a great way to use up paint that has thickened naturally. An easy way to thicken the paint is to pour a suitable amount into a shallow bowl and leave it exposed to air for several hours or even overnight. The thickened paint can then be applied by laying it on with a brush, palette knife, or whatever other tools you have on hand. Use your creativity! Thickened Chalk Paint can also be applied through the openings of a stencil for an embossed effect.



Wall Finish A single colour of Chalk Paint can add character and texture to a flat wall. Graphite paint looks very good with white objects placed against it and certainly makes a statement. In contrast, Old White with Clear Soft Wax also looks very appealing as a polished wall.



Cracked Paint and Crackle Varnish. To create a cracked paint look, a single colour of Chalk Paint can be applied more thickly and quickly crackled with the use of a portable heat source such as a hair dryer.

You can also achieve a cracked surface look by applying Annie Sloan Crackle Varnish directly over a coat of Chalk Paint. Annie likes to apply the Crackle Varnish over Old White because it resembles aged ivory when finished. You can backfill the cracks with Dark Soft Wax to age the finish. Both methods are recommended for small areas.

See **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, pp. 16-17, 20-23, 26-29, 30-31, 34-35, 48-49, 50-51, 56-57, 58-61, 70-71, 76-77, 78-79, 80-81, 84, 100-101, 102-103, 106-107, 108-109, 110-113, 114-115, 126-129, 130-133, 134-137, 138-139, 140-143, 146-149, 150-153; **CREATING THE FRENCH Look**, pp. 46-49, 52-53, 82-85, 86-89, 90-91, 140-141.

Wash

Use a wash technique over other layers of paint to tone the underlying colour. Apply Chalk Paint directly to the surface and while still wet gently wipe over the paint with a rag several times until you have achieved the look you desire.



A wash technique can be used to fill any wood grain or highlight any beautiful markings of the wood. Apply the paint by brushing it into the wood, working every which way to make certain it goes into the grain. Wipe off the excess several times until you have achieved the look you are after. The first couple of wipes will give it a translucent stain but if you continue to wipe the wood will look more like a

“lime washed” wood with the paint just in the grain. Old White, Pure White, and Duck Egg Blue are good colours for this effect.

You can also thin the paint with small amounts of water before brushing or wiping it over the surface.

This technique can also be used to stain new wood, letting the paint absorb completely and leaving the grain visible. Apply your choice of Chalk Paint and using a sponge and some water start wiping off the paint, wringing out the excess in clean water. Take off as much paint as you need to achieve the colour you want but try not to get the wood too soaked because it will raise the grain, especially on pine. Annie likes to apply varnish (Annie Sloan Lacquer) over this finish.

This technique is also a quick way to upcycle old frames and ornate ironwork. Beautiful results can be achieved over old gilded and other metallic finishes when applying Chalk Paint and then wiping away the excess.

You can also get a beautiful effect by washing different colours of Chalk Paint over each other in a multi-layered fashion, creating various tonal effects with the underlying colours ghosting through.

See **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, pp. 20-23, 62-65, 68-69, 70-71, 72-75, 85, 116-117, 118-121; **CREATING THE FRENCH LOOK**, pp. 54-55, 92-93, 106-107, 114-115.

Two Colour Distressed

Use this technique when you want to reveal an underlying accent colour when you distress edges and other raised areas. The underlying colour can be a layer of a contrasting Chalk Paint or an existing painted or stained finish.



A layer of Chalk Paint can be painted all over, or just in select areas, then waxed, rubbed back with fine sandpaper revealing the colour underneath, and finished off with additional wax. If you thin your top layer of paint with a little bit of water it will allow you to distress your piece more easily.

You can also apply a very diluted top coat so that the paint will be thin enough to cover the piece completely but the underlying colour will still show or “ghost” through. Avoid brush marks and once dry, wax the piece. You will notice that the wax makes the thin coat of paint slightly translucent.

Another technique is to simply take a brush dampened with water, put a dab of wax on it, then wipe it over the paint, pressing harder in areas where you want to remove the colour, such as the corners and edges. Use this method when you want to do something very soft and delicate to show off the colour combination.

If you are applying two different colours of paint, you can leave a bit of texture in the base layer by applying the paint unevenly, working the brush in all directions. This will create a different sort of wear when you distress the top layer. A second colour can also be simply used as an accent colour when you need a little bit of focus on an interesting detail.

QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS, pp. 14-15, 18-19, 24-25, 32-33, 38-41, 42-43, 44-47, 90-93; **CREATING THE FRENCH LOOK**, pp. 110-113.

Colour Blend

Use two or more different colours of Chalk Paint applied simultaneously when you want the change of colour to resemble the look of surfaces that have been repainted or have faded over the years.



Apply the paint by loading a different colour on each side of a brush and then brushing over the surface to artistically blend the colours. A brush can also be used with a stippling motion, working the colours wet-on-wet. Another method is to load your brush with one colour, dipping just the end or tips of the brush into a second colour, and then merging the two colours on the piece of furniture.

When working with three colours, choose three different tones that work well together and are not too contrasting. These could all be tones of one colour or tones of different colours. If using different colours it is better to work in fairly muted secondary or tertiary colours. Always paint the mid tone as the base colour on the furniture so you can go lighter and darker with the other colours.

You can also apply different colours of Chalk Paint with a sponge roller. Pour two different colours of paint side by side in a paint tray and carefully load your roller so that one half is one colour and one half the other. Roll over the surface in random directions to blend the colours; be careful to not over mix the colours to create just one. This is a particularly effective method for applying two colours of paint through a stencil.

See **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, pp. 36-37, 94-95, 96-99, 100-101, 150-153;
CREATING THE FRENCH LOOK, pp. 64-67

Dry Brush

This is a simple and relaxed painting technique, aiming not to cover every nook and cranny. You can apply Chalk Paint over the surface using just the tips or edges of the brush and varying the density of colour by applying more paint on select areas. The idea is to avoid working paint into the recesses, so be careful not to overload the brush and use its tips or edges to cover just the raised areas of your furniture piece.



If a more translucent look is desirable, you can thin the paint with a small amount of water.

Use this technique to quickly paint wicker or rattan. Patterns, such as plaids or stripes, are easily created by dry brushing more than one colour.

This technique is also a quick way to revamp old frames and ornate ironwork. Beautiful results can be achieved when dry brushing Chalk Paint over old gilded and other metallic finishes.

See **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, pp. 66-67; **CREATING THE FRENCH LOOK**, pp. 54-55, 116-117, 134-135.

Finishing with Annie Sloan Soft Wax

Annie Sloan Soft Wax is designed to work together with Chalk Paint as a “system.” It is used to give a beautiful mellow finish on painted furniture and walls. It makes the finish more durable, helps to prevent chipping, and offers protection from scratches and stains. This remarkable wax offers the finisher many options in its application.



Clear Wax Only

A layer of Clear Soft Wax is applied after the application of one or more layers of Chalk Paint. The wax needs to be “spread and pushed” into the underlying paint using a cloth or brush so that it absorbs into the paint (just like hand cream!). It is best to work in small sections at a time. You will note that Clear Soft Wax will slightly darken or enrich the underlying colour.

At this point you may want to leave it for a smooth or modern finish. You could buff the wax a little now just to make certain it is nice and even. You may want to sand your finish now to distress it. After sanding, apply more clear wax but again make certain that the wax is absorbed and evenly applied and excess wax is removed. For a higher sheen, buff the wax the next day.

Clear and Dark Wax

To age and give visual texture to your paintwork apply a layer of Clear Soft Wax first and then apply Dark Soft Wax. Wipe off the excess wax, leaving the dark wax in the recesses. Use a small amount of clear wax to remove some of the darker wax if the result is too dark.

See **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, pp. 20-23, 26-29, 36-37, 44-47, 94-95, 96-99, 126-129, 130-133, 140-143; **CREATING THE FRENCH LOOK**, pp. 46-49, 84-85, 86-89, 110-113.

Mixing Clear and Dark Wax Together

You can create lighter brown waxes by mixing varying amounts of Clear and Dark Soft Wax together to get your desired depth of colour. The waxes can be mixed together in a separate container, or blended together on the surface.

See **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, pp. 38-41, 62-65, 72-75, 100-101; **CREATING THE FRENCH LOOK**, pp. 64-67.

Dark Wax Only

Using Dark Soft Wax without applying a layer of Clear Soft Wax first is suitable for darker or brighter Chalk Paint colours ONLY.

It is best when using only Dark Soft Wax to apply the wax in small manageable sections. The dark wax contains pigments that will stain the underlying paint layer if it is not protected with a layer of clear wax first. You can use a small amount of clear wax to lighten any areas that become too dark, but some dark coloration will be left behind.

See **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, pp. 30-31, 76-77, 146-149.

Tinting Soft Wax with Chalk Paint

You can make any colour of wax by tinting Soft Wax with your choice of Chalk Paint.

Mix about 30-50% paint into Clear Soft Wax to form a coloured wax; this ratio can be varied to your liking. Too much and it won't mix; too little and the wax will have no colour. You can mix the paint and wax together in a container or apply the wax on the surface and while still wet work in a small amount of paint with a brush. Spread the paint and wax mixture over your piece of furniture in manageable sections, wiping off the excess wax as you go.

You can add a small amount of light coloured paint into Dark Soft Wax to lighten the colour. Try mixing Old White into Clear Soft Wax to make a white wax or a bit of Aubusson Blue into Dark Soft Wax to make it almost black.

See **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, pp. 34-35, 56-57, 62-65, 96-99, 100-101.

Soft Wax and White Spirit

You can create an easy-to-use “antiquing glaze” by diluting Dark Soft Wax with White Spirit.

Start by applying a coat of Clear Soft Wax and wipe it with a cloth to remove any excess wax. Next mix equal amounts of Dark Soft Wax and low odour White Spirit together to form a thin watery liquid. Brush on the wax mixture and remove the excess with a dry soft cloth so the dark colour is left in the recesses and texture of the paint.

Use a small amount of clear wax to remove some of the dark wax mixture if the result is too dark. It is important to note that this type of wax application will not buff to a high sheen.

See **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, pp. 26-29.

Distressing Your Finish

Annie likes to use sandpaper to distress a piece of furniture that has been painted with Chalk Paint. Her preferred method is to use a little fine-grade sandpaper to lightly rub along the edges, handles, drawer fronts, and top as a way of accentuating the character of a piece after first applying a coat of Clear Soft Wax. She applies the wax first to slightly soften the Chalk Paint, making the distressing process easier. It also allows you to see where you are going and helps to reduce sanding dust, keeping your environment clean. She uses various grits of sandpaper, ranging from 120 to 220 grade, depending on how much paint she wants to remove.



Use the sandpaper by taking a sheet, folding it into quarters, and tearing it into four pieces. Fold a quarter in half and use that to work all over the piece. When it becomes full with paint and wax, turn it over and use the other side. When sanding the furniture take care not to rub away areas of a similar size because this can make the piece look rather spotty. It should be evenly uneven – in other words, there should be balance.

Other Finishing Methods

Although using Annie Sloan Soft Wax is Annie's preferred method for finishing her pieces of furniture, items painted with Chalk Paint do not always have to be waxed. Consider some of the following alternatives when deciding how to finish your piece.

You can also take some alternative approaches to distressing your finish. You can gently rub the Chalk Paint with a damp cloth or sponge to create a washed or limed effect. This is also a gentle way to simply ease back edges. Remember to occasionally wipe off any "wet" paint so you can see your progress. See **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, pp. 54-55; **CREATING THE FRENCH LOOK**, pp. 54-55. Also refer to the Wash Technique.

Another distressing method you may want to use is to wipe over the surface with a damp brush dipped in Clear Soft Wax to remove some of the top layer of paint. This should cause the base coat to show through, but the effect can be a bit subtle. See **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, pp. 24-25, 42-43.

Buffing with a Soft Cloth

Sometimes just buffing dried layers of Chalk Paint with a clean soft cloth is enough to give the paint a soft sheen and a smooth feel. The friction from the buffing action will slightly harden the paint and give it light to moderate durability. This method is particularly effective on carved picture and mirror frames.

Sanding with Very Fine Sandpaper

Simply sanding Chalk Paint after it has completely dried can buff the paint so it is very smooth and develops a natural patina, even without wax. Starting with a very smooth surface and slightly thinning the paint with water during the application process will yield the best results. Use higher grits of sandpaper (600 or 1000 grade) for this technique. These higher grits can be found at auto supply shops and fine woodworking shops.

It is important to note that completing a Chalk Paint finish by just buffing or sanding does not offer the same level of stain protection and durability as a coat of wax.

Applying Varnish

Annie recommends applying two coats of a water-based varnish, such as her Annie Sloan Lacquer, over floors that have been painted with Chalk Paint for protection and durability (a wax coating would be too slippery for foot traffic). The Lacquer performs best when applied with a sponge roller but it is not ideal for an area likely to become very wet.

Occasionally Annie applies varnish on furniture as well. This is best done using either a brush made specifically for varnish applications or by spray. Two coats are recommended and you should allow 24 hours drying time between coats. Once the varnish is completely dry and has begun to cure (approximately 7 days), you may wish to follow with an application of Annie Sloan Soft Wax to help diminish surface abrasions and scratches.

It should be noted that varnish finishes are difficult to repair should they become scratched or suffer other types of damage. Most times the varnish will need to be removed by stripping the surface; consequently this will require the reapplication of both paint and varnish. A scratch in a waxed surface can simply be filled in and repaired with more wax.

Annie Sloan Lacquer, or any other brand of varnish, cannot be applied over Soft Wax.

See **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, pp. 78-79, 102-103; **CREATING THE FRENCH Look**, pp. 90-91, 92-93.

Painting Other Surfaces

Part of the fun in using Chalk Paint is that it can be applied over so many different types of surfaces. Consider some of the following when deciding what to paint.



For Use in Gardens

Use Chalk Paint on outdoor wood, metal, concrete, matte plastic or terracotta and leave to harden overnight before exposing it to the rain. **Annie Sloan Soft Wax is never used on outdoor items.**

You can use Graphite to create a lead or slate look on pots and statuary, or something as simple as Old White and garden soil for age.

Metal Work & Light Fixtures

Chalk Paint can give new life to old brass or other metal fixtures. Over rusted areas, the paint will slow down the corrosion but the rust will reappear over time. If so required - any rust areas should be treated with a rust inhibitor before applying the paint.

Wood or Concrete Floors

Chalk Paint can transform old varnished wood floors or concrete floors. Apply two or three coats of paint and seal with two coats of Annie Sloan Lacquer for durability.

Walls

A sponge roller or large brush can be used to apply Chalk Paint to a wall, giving the wall a slight amount of texture and some visual dimension. A fabric or wool roller can be used to create texture, depth and interest, particularly when backfilled with Soft Wax and sanded smooth. The painted surface can also be sanded back slightly to create an interesting textured finish.



Insides of Drawers and Cabinets

The insides of drawers and cabinets are an ideal place to leave your “signature” on a piece of furniture. You can apply Chalk Paint in a contrasting colour and/or you may want to add some hand painting, stencilled patterns, or decoupage elements.



What About Cabinets?

You can use Chalk Paint on most kitchen and bathroom cabinets. Apply at least 2 coats of paint and then give them two or three coats of wax for protection.

- Annie Sloan Soft Wax is water repellent and strong and makes a good connection to the paint for durability
- Allow each coat of wax to dry 24 hours
- Chalk Paint is meant to give character and interest rather than a perfectly smooth “plastic” finish like some other paints
- Refresh every now and again with some more wax when needed

- Wipe over with a damp cloth to clean; using a strong cleaner may be necessary for stubborn marks but it will likely remove some wax and the area will need re-waxing
- No need to sand or prime although in areas where there is a lot of use, like the cutlery drawer in the kitchen, it might be wise

“I am assuming the kitchen is wooden. If you are painting onto an extremely shiny surface it will not adhere so well but nevertheless we do use it on these surfaces. For somewhere that gets a lot of use, like a kitchen, a wooden surface provides the best surface, BUT the paint will stick to even glass, and if you have a kitchen you want painted rather than have an ugly laminate then I would go ahead! Some laminates are extremely shiny like glass but some are less so. The less the shine the better the adherence of the paint.”

- Annie Sloan

Embellishments

There are many ways to add some fine finishing details to your piece of furniture to give it that special final touch.



Decoupage

The word “decoupage” is derived from the French word meaning “to cut out.” Decoupage is a technique for applying printed paper motifs on furniture. There are many resources for decoupage papers – vintage wallpaper, old books, sheet music, and post cards (with the backing removed), just to name a few. You can also make copies of a black and white design element, apply it to your surface, and hand colour it with Chalk Paint that has been diluted with water.

Decoupaged elements look particularly nice when sealed with the Annie Sloan Craqueleur crackle varnish.



Metal Leaf

You can use metal leaf to add an elegant touch to edges and other details on tables, mirrors, picture frames, and various types of accessories. Metal leaf is commonly available in composition gold (which is actually copper alloyed with zinc), aluminium (imitation silver), and copper.

The leaves are applied by first painting a coat of water-based size over a pre painted surface. In keeping with tradition, Primer Red would be under gold colours and Louis Blue or Duck Egg Blue under silver colours. The leaf is applied and gently flattened with a soft flat brush to adhere it to the surface. Once finished the gilding should be protected with wax to prevent tarnishing.



Stencils

Stencils have been used since prehistoric times and it was the Chinese that elevated stencilling to an art form. Stencils are used today to add special attention to tabletops, drawer fronts, walls, the insides of drawers, or the backside of doors. They are available in various sizes and design styles, from historically correct to vintage to contemporary, and from a large number of resources.

Chalk Paint is an excellent medium for stencilling and works well on furniture, walls, and fabrics. The paint can be applied through the openings of a stencil using a number of different tools, including a sponge roller, stencil brush, and even your fingertip wrapped with a small piece of soft cloth.

If you are stencilling Chalk Paint on fabric and wish to wash the fabric afterwards, let the stencilling dry for 24 hours. Then heat set the painted cloth by placing it in a dryer for approximately 1 hour or by ironing (no steam) with a protective layer between the iron and the painted item.

Printing or Stamping

One of the easiest ways to add pattern to your painted surface is to “print” the pattern using fairly common household items. A potato can be cut into a stamp to create polka dots, and matchsticks and heavy card stock can be used to create lines.

Hand Painting

A collection of artists brushes, paint pens, markers etc can be useful when adding hand painted elements to your surface. Several artists find using a projector to project an image onto the surface for tracing is useful. A steady hand and some practice will help – and remember that the eye will always lead the hand.

If you want to know more about these various embellishment techniques, please refer to Chapters Four and Five in **QUICK AND EASY PAINT TRANSFORMATIONS**, pp. 104-153.

Common Problems Using Chalk Paint

Your customers will encounter some of the following common mistakes and seek your advice.

Using the paint too thinly and precisely. Advise your customers to “lay it on” a bit and loosen up. Some brush strokes showing in the finish are part of the “look.” A smooth look is more appropriate for a retro or contemporary look rather than a vintage look.

Thinking there is only one way to use the paint. Remind them that they can add water when needed for a smoother application, or they can allow the paint to thicken for more texture.

Don't over distress so that the piece looks like too contrived. Many finishes are best when just a little bit of paint is evenly rubbed away all over. Distressing should not be an arduous chore.

Not understanding colour so that the colours are too contrasting. Advise your customers to avoid layering primary colours. Remember the colour wheel; opposites attract as long as they are muted. Show them your colour book so they understand how to soften a colour with the addition of Old White. Have lots of samples showing different colour combinations.

Thinking the paint is a “coat of steel.” A piece of furniture finished with Chalk Paint and then waxed will stand up to “normal wear and tear.” Advise your customers to treat their piece as they would a fine antique. Allow the finish to cure. Avoid excessive water and scratchy objects. Use coasters under water glasses and place mats on dining tables. Clean with a soft cloth and avoid all liquid furniture polishes.

Forgetting that Chalk Paint is a decorative paint. Chalk Paint was specifically designed for furniture, but it can be used on walls and other surfaces. You will be amazed at all the different types of surfaces your customers will want to paint! Gently remind them that it is a decorative paint, not a “cure all” for every surface and needs to be applied intelligently. Making a test area before starting is a good idea to iron out any potential problems before it's too late.

Seeing fluids on top of the paint when opening the can. “Product separation” is typical for all paint products. Advise your customer to not pour off the fluids on top; simply use a stir stick or paint mixer to mix the fluids back in. Turn the can over a couple of hours before using (the good stuff does settle on the bottom), and then shake it by hand to mix.

Accidentally leaving the lid off the can of paint. A skin can form on the top of the paint when it is exposed to air for a long period of time. Reassure your customer if this happens – the skin can be mixed back into the paint and the thickened paint can be thinned with a small amount of water, if necessary. If they are preparing Chalk Paint for an impasto technique, it is best to pour out the paint to be thickened into a separate container. They may want to stir it occasionally while thickening to prevent a skin from forming.

Painting a stained piece of furniture and having a discolouration in the new paint layer. There may be times when a yellow or pink stain will bleed through the paint, particularly when using a lighter colour. This is known as “bleed through.” There are a couple of reasons this happens: The piece of furniture was previously stained with a bleeding stain (typically found on pieces from the 1930s and 1940s), or you are painting over an open grain wood where its tannins are stored in the wood grain (oak is notorious for this). Instruct your customer to apply one or two coats of clear shellac or clear knotting solution (Rustins and International are two good brands) by cloth or brush to block the staining effect. If they have already applied a coat of Chalk Paint, there is no need to remove the layer of paint; they can apply the shellac directly on top.

The paint is not sticking. A lot of what we paint has a history and your customer may not know what it is. Advise them to clean the surface well and, if necessary, apply one or two coats of clear shellac by cloth or brush. It may be necessary for them to perform some or all of the following steps:

- Remove any old greasy or oily residues with a soft cloth moistened with white spirit.
- Clean all surfaces or parts that will be painted with soap and water (Use a Scotch Brite pad to lightly scrub the surface.) A soft brush can be used to work into open grain and intricate carvings. Avoid saturating the surface
- Rinse with a clean rag and warm water and let the piece dry completely

Advise your customer to test the paint first in an inconspicuous area to make sure of its bonding capabilities and also to ensure that the piece was not previously stained with a colour bleeding stain. If the test patch shows any of the underlying stain colour bleeding through, it will be necessary to first apply one or two coats of shellac (see above).

“Painting with Chalk Paint should always be a pleasure.

If it is feeling like hard work then maybe the paint is too thick. Add some water to make the paint flow easily.

Are you working with a small brush? Switch to a bigger one to get the job done quickly.

Is it hard work rubbing back with sandpaper? Use a coarser sandpaper but next time paint a thinner top coat.”

- Annie Sloan

Problems Using Annie Sloan Soft Wax

The number one problem customers seem to encounter,, is they have applied too much Soft Wax. Common complaints are the wax remains tacky or sticky, it shows fingerprints, or it looks streaky.

Use the wax sparingly!

You should advise your customers to always apply the Soft Wax in thin layers. **The wax needs to be “spread and massaged” into the underlying paint** using a cloth or brush so that it absorbs into the paint (just like hand cream!). They should always remove any and all excess wax. It is important to advise your customer to work in small sections at a time and to change to a clean rag frequently as an old one can become clogged with wax and become ineffective.

As a last resort, you can instruct your customer to remove the excess wax by wiping over the surface with a cloth dampened with low odour white spirit. Most likely they will need to reapply a thin coat of wax.

They may also encounter some of the following problems:

Not applying enough wax. Your customer needs to apply enough wax to completely cover the surface. Skipped parts can result in an uneven or patchy look. When in doubt they should apply a second coat of wax, particularly in areas where they have removed some wax during the sanding process.

There is no sheen Advise your customer to apply thin layers of wax - the classic rule of thumb is the thinner the coat of wax the more sheen in the finish. Your customer can also allow the wax to dry overnight before buffing. They will likely find the job will be much easier if they wait till the following day.

Their result is a dark streaky or patchy look. The Dark Soft Wax contains pigments that will “stain” the paint, making the colour difficult to remove. Advise your customer that in almost all cases it is best to apply a layer of clear wax first. Failure to remove all of the excess dark wax after application can also result in a dark streaky or patch look. Remember – they can always use a small amount of clear wax as a “magic eraser.” You may also want to suggest that your customer mix dark wax and clear wax together for a lighter colour, or thin the dark wax with a small amount of low-odour white spirit for a thinner application.

Problems Using Other Products

Applying Annie Sloan Lacquer over a dark Chalk Paint colour has left a milky coloration.

Annie Sloan Lacquer is a matte varnish. This means that it contains flattening agents to give it that low lustre. If the Lacquer is applied thickly over a dark surface, those flattening agents will appear, creating a “frosted” or “milky” look to the finish. There is no easy fix for this problem and your customer will have to reapply a coat of Chalk Paint. Advise your customers to apply the Lacquer in two thin coats.

The top coat of Annie Sloan Crackle Varnish (Step 2) is too thick. Advise your customer to place the container in a bowl of very hot water to warm it and make it more workable. They can also moisten their brush with water, wipe it off and then proceed – a little water will help the Step 2 product to spread more easily.

A small amount of crackle varnish has peeled off. The Crackle Varnish product is sensitive to heat and moisture and if the surface it is applied to has any moisture in it or comes in contact with extreme heat it is likely that it will continue to crack and possibly lift. A room that gets steamy, such as a bathroom, is not the best choice for a Crackle Varnish finish.

The cracks haven’t appeared. This usually happens when the top coat is allowed to dry before the heat is applied to force the cracking.

