

How you can restore castoff furniture to a semi-antique look

If you want to satisfy your yearnings for antiques without having to take out a loan, try refinishing antiques found at estate sales or garage sales.

It really is as easy as it sounds. But care must be taken, because restoration done incorrectly can turn a soon-to-be priceless antique into a piece of junk.

Before you begin your restoration of that 19th century chest of drawers you found, you need to decide whether or not you want it to look carefully aged or like brand-new. But if you overrestore the piece it may not be classified as an antique. And if you excel in your restoration project, you might even be able to fool the experts.

And to help you turn a rickety rocker into a work of art, George Wagoner's book "Refinishing Old Furniture" (Tab Books) gives you step-by-step instructions on refinishing.

His detailed guide will help from beginning to end as you learn how to:

- Choose the right finish and properly apply it.
- Strip off the old finish and fill dents and holes.
- Add special touches such as antiquing, distressing, gilding and gold leaf, and old-fashioned milk paint.

BEGINNING REFINISHING
Before your journey into the world of furniture restoration begins, you must have some of the necessary tools. You don't need to clean out the nearest hardware store and, depending on what you want to restore, you may not need too many tools anyway. Wagoner suggests the following:

HOME FACTS

Many people surveyed want their spouses to help more with cleaning around the house.

Men:	24%
Women:	47%

Percent who wanted more help with housecleaning.

SOURCE: Household Hints and Tips Better Homes and Gardens books

- A work area with a work bench.
- A spatula or wide metal putty knife to break free finish on level surfaces.
- Sandpaper, sandpaper block, soft cotton cloth, a bristle brush, steel wool for other finishing work.
- A lightweight 13-ounce claw hammer, and assortment of screwdrivers, slotted and Phillips cross-tips, a sharp knife and a reliable utility knife for wood-working.
- A four-in-hand wood file, wood chisels of various sizes and a saw for woodworking.

Once you've assembled your tool supply, you are ready to go hunting for your first project, unless your first project is already sitting in your attic or basement.

The best place to start searching is at garage sales or dumps. And make your first project a small one, such as a small chair or an end table. This way you won't become discouraged.

Once you've found your first victim, you're ready to begin the refinishing process.

The first step is to remove the old finish. But examine it carefully, because you might not need to take it off. You might be able to polish the old finish up to new.

To remove the finish you can use removers like paint stripper or lacquer thinner. Or you can use a spatula to remove chipping and flaking finish. Apply remover with a bristle brush and when the finish wrinkles you can use the putty knife to push off the loose finish. Be careful because you can gouge the real wood at this point.

To help remove the finish you can soak steel wool in the remover and gently scrub with the grain to remove the old finish.

Optical Illusions
Make any room look larger by not overfurnishing. Rooms with slanted ceilings will look bigger by placing the heaviest and largest furniture against the highest walls.

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Floor finish... from page 10

Oriental (attend a class, buy an illustrated book). When you know what kind and quality of rug you want and can afford, visit several vendors — from import shops to department stores — to compare inventories and pricing.

Despite their hand-loomed appearance, fringed brand rugs (popular in country interiors) are inexpensive, yet are practical and easy to maintain.

HARDWOOD
You can't go wrong with wood — it adds warmth and provides a pleasing backdrop for any decor.

If your home has hardwood floors, sanding and sealing will restore their original beauty. (You can rent the equipment and do it yourself, or have it done professionally.)

The stain you select needn't be dark brown, Reddish, or mahogany-like hues blend beautifully with traditional and casual interiors. Consider a bleached or pickled finish for a more contemporary or Southwest look.

New finishes make hardwood floors easy to clean and maintain. Baked-in penetrating stains impart a soft, natural sheen to the wood; urethane resins cured under ultraviolet light create no-wax finishes.

Just as patterns have returned to rugs and carpeting, so have they to wood floors. Stencils cre-

ate checkerboard patterns, border and faux area rugs.

TILE
For a look that is timeless, decorative and durable, consider tile.

Ceramic tiles used for flooring are larger (from 6 to 12 inches square) and thicker than those used to pave walls and countertops.

Glazed tile has color baked into its surface, and often has a dull finish to make it less slippery. Glazes are considered an art form, and formulas and methods from the past are being resurrected.

Hand-painted, imported tiles can be collectors' items. Unglazed tiles in natural clay colors are popular in Southwest and Spanish-style homes; those that mimic genuine slate, marble, granite and other stones also are available.

VINYL
Resilient flooring has many forms, most commonly sheet vinyl and vinyl tile. These are durable, water- and stain-resistant, and come in a multitude of attractive no-wax patterns and surfaces.

Because it is available in styles that are embossed, carved, textured and grained, resilient flooring is an ideal choice if you want to hide a floor's flaws and irregularities.

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A new high-tech technique creates vinyl tiles that resemble marble or granite with photographic fidelity — offering an inexpensive way to dramatize entryways, hallways and baths.

Recently introduced by the Armstrong company, vinyl tiles have turned flooring into an artist's canvas. The resulting designs (made from a palette of 14 colors) include black-and-white checkerboards, custom inlays, borders,

and (for children's rooms) race-tracks and hopscotch patterns. Architect Michael Graves uses solid-colored vinyl tiles in combination with hardwood flooring.

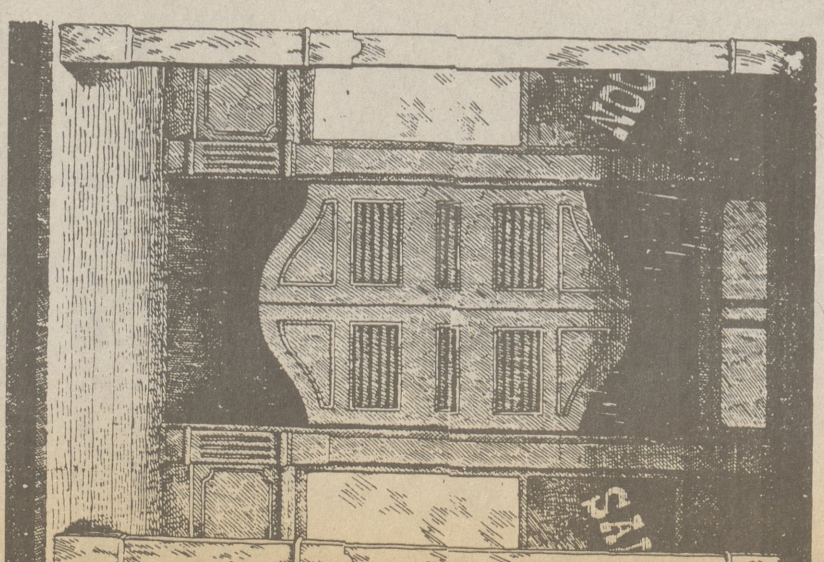
Borders for vinyl sheet flooring also come on rolls, just like wallpaper.

NEW (AND OLD) OPTIONS
Concrete, or colored cement, is a newly popular flooring material

for kitchens, baths and hallways. Not only is it inexpensive, it's easy to clean.

Hot options for "earthy" interiors include quarry tile, natural stone, brick, flagstone and slate.

According to *Metropolitan Home* magazine, a "risky yet soulful" floor surface, "the omnipresent stuff many of us grew up on" has made a comeback.



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