

Wood Burning – Not Just for Kids Anymore

There was a time when adults considered wood burning child's play, and many ten year olds received wood burning kits for Christmas or birthday. These kits consisted of a wood burning pen, pine wood plaque, pattern, a few colored pencils and water based finish.

We have come a long way, as adults have discovered the creative pleasure of designing unique decorative gifts using wood burning techniques. The most popular items are lazy susans, cutting boards, and small pieces of furniture.

Wood burning is easy to learn. It is a little time consuming, but the results are worth the effort. We will use a kitchen cutting board as an example of how you can turn something ordinary into something beautiful, decorative and functional. You can buy supplies online or from your local craft store.

You will need:

1 Wood burning pen

1 kitchen cutting board. Maple is preferred but pine works well

#400 standard sandpaper

1 design of your choice. Use an embroidery pattern, check craft magazines, or buy a book of wood burning patterns from your local craft store. Start with a simple design.

1 sheet tracing paper

Scotch tape

1 hard lead pencil

1 set colored oil pencils

1 can Krylon fixative spray

600 wet or dry sandpaper

Sanding block

Satin or Gloss acrylic water based finish.

Several 1" & 2" sponge applicators

Wood stirring sticks

3M fine finishing pads

Amber Wax

Beeswax

Polishing cloth

Food safe salad bowl finish

Thin strip of leather

Directions:

1. Plug in your wood burning pen.
2. While pen is heating, lightly sand both sides of your cutting board with #400 sandpaper to make the surface smooth enough for the pen to glide.
3. Cut your design to fit your board.
4. Place design on board and tape corners.
5. Slip tracing paper under design.
6. Carefully trace design onto board. Remove design and tracing paper when finished. You are now ready to burn your design into the wood.
7. Place your cutting board on a flat surface. Sit comfortably and gently pass the wood burning pen over your tracing. Don't grip the pen, as this will quickly cause hand fatigue. Go slowly and gently, letting the pen do the work. Hold pen longer over any area you wish to make darker. For lighter lines, make one pass.
8. When you've finished tracing your design, unplug the pen. You are now ready to color your design.
9. If you traced a colored design, match your pencils as much as possible to the colors in your pattern. With your model as a guide, use your pencils to color your design. Don't try to make an exact copy, but use your own sense of color and your own creativity to make the design yours. Shading areas of your designs gives it more depth.
10. Once you are satisfied, lightly spray three coats of fixative about ten minutes apart... This sets your colors and eliminates smearing when you apply your finish.
11. Lightly sand using #600 paper. You will use the sandpaper dry for this step.

12. Dust off sand particles with a soft lint free cloth.
13. Open your can of finish and gently stir it with a “popsicle” stick.
14. Using the brush most comfortable for your hand and the size of your project, evenly apply a thin coat of finish. Let dry at least 2-3 hours.*
15. Apply an additional 5 coats of finish every three hours, making sure that each coat is thoroughly dry before applying the next.
16. Wet a piece of #600 sandpaper and lightly sand over your design. You will notice a white residue as you sand. This is fine. Wipe it with clear water when you've finished sanding.
17. Apply another 4 coats of finish as directed above. Sand with wet #600 paper as directed above.
18. Apply three final coats of finish as directed, sanding as directed.
19. Dip your 3M pad into the amber wax and rub design until all shiny spots disappear.
20. Dip another 3M pad into beeswax and lightly coat the surface.
21. Using a lint free polishing cloth, rub until all traces of wax are gone and your piece has a smooth high or satin sheen, depending on your choice of finish. Your board should be velvety smooth.
22. Rub the back of the cutting board with food safe salad bowl finish. This seals the wood, making it safe to use.
23. Sign your name or initials and date on the back of your piece.
23. Slip a leather thong through the top of the board and hang it.

You have created something beautiful and functional that you can be proud to own or give. Very few wood surfaces cannot be wood burned. You can put your own stamp on your home decor by wood burning accessories and furniture.

Earn extra money at craft fairs and farmers markets where wood-burned items are most popular.

*Many water based finishes indicate you can continue applying after just one hour. Waiting 2-3 hours before re-coating, ensures that your piece is thoroughly dry regardless of humidity. Allowing 2-3 hours drying time also creates a more durable finish.