

Looking to refresh your outdoor furniture? Get a step-by-step tutorial to find out how to paint outdoor wood furniture so it will last.

When I shared how to paint outdoor metal furniture, I was pleasantly surprised by two things: 1) how many of you needed the tutorial, and 2) how many of you were ready for its companion post on how to paint outdoor wood furniture. This is a stepbystep tutorial for painting wooden patio furniture, just in time for summer.

Wooden outdoor furniture can be hard to maintain, but the good news is that painting wood furniture is easy. Below are FAQs, materials, and a clear howto that will help the finish last.

Painting Wood Furniture FAQs

What is the best paint for outdoor wood furniture?

For outdoor wood furniture, a highquality exterior (latex or acrylic) paint is a practical choice. Exterior paints formulated for weather resistance and UV protection will hold up best; satin, semigloss, or gloss finishes are more durable than flat sheens.

Do I need to prime?

Yes. Primer helps seal the wood, improves adhesion, and provides protection against moisture. Use an exterior primer appropriate for the substrate (latex or oilbased primer depending on the existing finish).

Can I spray paint my outdoor furniture?

You can, but spray paint jobs typically don't last as long as a careful brush/roller finish. Spray is convenient for covered or lowtraffic pieces; for the most durable result, handpaint with a brush and roller.

Can I paint something that wasn't painted previously?

Absolutely. For bare wood, use a primer meant for raw wood. For previously oiled surfaces, clean and sand lightly first, then prime with a product that will adhere to the old finish.

How to Paint Wood Outdoor Furniture

For this project the author painted two small wooden benches and a set of director's chairs that had been outside for years. The steps below preserve the logical order for preparation, priming, and painting.

Materials

- Palm sander (assorted sandpaper)
- Old rags for cleaning
- Exterior primer
- Highquality exterior paint
- Trim roller + tray, paint brush

Steps

Sand

Give the entire piece a light sanding with a palm sander. Remove any flaking paint or mildew buildup and smooth the old finish so the new paint can adhere. If the piece is very dirty, add an extra cleaning step before sanding.

Clean

Remove all sanding dust and any dirt. You can pressurewash, wipe with a damp rag, or use a mild cleaner. Make sure the piece is completely dry before priming.

Prime

Apply a coat of highquality exterior primer. Turn the piece upside down and prime the underside first, then flip and prime the top. Oilbased primers (like Kilz or Zinsser BIN) are useful when covering difficult existing finishes.

Paint

Use a trim roller for the large surfaces and a brush for seams and detailed areas. Apply two thin coats, following drying times on the paint can. Lightly sand between coats if needed for the smoothest finish.

Cure and Maintain

Allow several days to weeks for paint to fully cure before heavy outdoor use. For long life, keep pieces under cover when possible and inspect annually for chips and wear; touch up as needed.

Notes and Tips

- Prefer exteriorgrade paints and primers for weather resistance.
- Glossier finishes (satin/semigloss) hold up better outdoors.
- Always remove or neutralize mildew before painting.

