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You are responsible for your own safety!

WillowProducts makes no express nor implied warranty on the information herein. Practice good personal safety and safe handling of all products.

It is suggested that you practice on scrap materials until you are satisfied in the result **BEFORE** you attempt to apply any finish to a completed work to avoid possible unseen damage.

If using an open flame with wax, practice caution to avoid fires and ensure that the area is properly ventilated.



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Methods to smooth and polish wax.

There are probably many others as artist tend to be very resourceful folks indeed!

A really great online resource for wax sculpting is www.theclubhouse1.NET In order to get to the "Sculptor's Forum" you'll need to create an account, but there are 4000 members all posting their amazing work. Just use type "+wax +polish" and you should find many posts and photo's to boot. And there is so much more. Many materials, techniques, themes, etc. From novice to pros.

There are 3 main categories: Mechanical, Chemical, and Heat.

All these techniques take a little practice. Doing some practice runs on some doodles is highly recommended before you jump to a piece that you've invested a lot of time on.



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Mechanical Polishing

- 1) A favorite is polishing under cool (not cold) water with t-shirt material. Scrub with cotton t-shirt material or Panty hose while holding the piece under running water. Takes a little elbow grease, but is very controllable and stable.
- 2) To speed things up a bit on #1 above, apply Fast Orange hand cleaner or toothpaste on the cloth to capitalize their fine polishing particles. You can also use polishing compound or buffing compound available at all auto parts houses or departments.
- 3) Using an old electric toothbrush with toothpaste under running water might be worth trying!
- 4) Wet sand using sanding sponges or sandpaper.
- 5) Steel wool under running water.
- 6) Use sandpaper dusted with baby powder. 400 grit paper with baby powder generously applied to prevent clogging of sandpaper is reported to leave a silky smooth and shiny surface. I haven't tried it yet but felt obligated to report it. Those that have swear it is awesome! Use a dust mask if you try it!.



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Chemical Polishing

- 1) Always test on a scrap piece to see the effect. Also so of these could affect your mold material, so again... always test for compatibility of the materials you use.
- 2) While I don't personally recommend them, many artists use chemicals like lighter fluid which has a fast affect. But I don't like handling such extreme chemicals and they can soften the surface for what seems like forever. Low order terpenoids are used by many and Naptha works too, but be careful not to let it penetrate too deep. Be sure to wear gloves, eye protection, and have good ventilation because these chemicals can be dangerous if not handled properly... BY AN ADULT!



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Chemical Polishing

Here's the recipe for a great homemade polish for any wax:

Denatured alcohol, PGA or Vodka 4-5 parts

Castor oil 1 part

Castor oil can be purchased at health food stores or a pharmacy. It's very inexpensive. PGA or Everclear can be substituted for the denatured alcohol and is available from liquor stores. With a little effort, when applied to a soft cotton cloth, it will remove scratches and give you a very smooth and shiny sheen. Just be sure to wash your hands well since castor is used as a natural laxative. Also wash it from the wax to make sure it doesn't interfere with your casting materials. A quick compatibility test is well worth the time investment. Alcohol alone works, but takes longer and more effort. You can also try replacing the Castor with dish detergent.



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Flame or Heat Polishing

- 1) For larger pieces, flame polishing can do amazing things. Using a squeeze bottle alcohol torch. This takes a little practice, but basically the flame is just whisked across the surface of the wax and the surface will become smooth and shiny. My blog and gallery photos feature a "surfer" by Rick Force that shows what flame polishing can do. Tricky, but a great technique to know... it's been used on acrylics and plastics for decades. Of course if you hold it too long, you could end up with a puddle.
- 2) Same basic technique as above but using a mini butane torch like those used for brazing and soldering. They are very inexpensive at home improvement stores. Get one with a tiny but active flame.
- 3) A "secret" of many wax artists is to use a 3m super fine sanding sponge and an alcohol lamp. The corner of the sponge is quickly waved across the lamp to get it hot enough to slightly melt the wax. The sponge is then quickly and lightly swiped across the wax. Of course you must use extreme care not to set the sponge on fire or burn yourself. Practice, practice, practice.