

Instructions for Creating a Wood Look on AZEK (brushing and spraying)



There are only 2 possible ways to make Aqua-DIY coatings fail on AZEK:

- Failure to follow the preparation instructions.
- Failure to follow the environmental guidelines.

Read & follow these simple instructions carefully and your AZEK / Aqua-DIY will be successful and provide you with decades of beautiful performance.

Aqua-DIY coatings do not stick to the pvc's surface, they bond with it on a molecular level, providing ultimate performance.

It must be applied directly to the pvc. That is why surface preparation is crucial: you must remove the surface contaminants left over from the material's manufacturing process before applying the paint.

This molecular bond is the result of a chemical reaction which takes place when our coatings are applied to the pvc. This reaction will not occur if the following requirements are not met:

Temperature, at the time of application and for 24 hours after, must be above 50°F. The painted surfaces must also not be exposed to precipitation for the first 24 hours after application.

Note: These instructions are meant to be simple and concise. You can find more detailed information by visiting the FAQ section and/or Troubleshooting Guide at: www.aqua-diy.com/azek.

The GrainEX is used to create the grain and the Stain Top Coat creates the wood color and blends in the grain.

1. Product and Surface Preparation

GrainEX and Stain Top Coat should be stirred prior to use. Avoid shaking the container to mix as this may introduce air bubbles into the coating and result in a poor finish during application.

Prior to beginning your project, we recommend applying the Stain Top Coat on a small test sample to ensure it is the color ordered. The coating will darken as it dries and with multiple passes (coats).



2. Masking

Use painter's masking tape to mask all areas which are not to be coated.

This is especially critical if the cellular PVC product will be sprayed already installed.

When possible, pre-finishing product prior to installation will produce better results, albeit touch ups after installation will normally be required.



3. Surface Cleaning

AZEK must be cleaned thoroughly prior to coating; this is the most critical step to achieve many years of performance.

****Attention AZEK PaintPro Users****

AZEK's PaintPro products do not require cleaning before paint application. Simply remove dust and debris from the surface with a damp cloth or pressurized air, and your surface will be ready to be coated.

Degreasing with VK

Use abrasive pads and lint free towels for this phase.

Apply the VK cleaner to the abrasive pad, and start scrubbing until a light foam develops.

Applying a bit more pressure specifically along the edges of the profiles at this stage will ensure the coating "wraps" well around the edges.



Then dry the surface fully with the lint free cloth.



Quality Control – Cleaning

If the above steps are followed, the surface will be ready. If there is any doubt, it is possible to verify with 100% certainty that the surface is free of contamination; this can be performed by a simple water test.

Water Test Procedure: A squeeze bottle is ideal for this process

PASS – Place a few drops of water on the cleaned surface (around 1 teaspoon). The surface is clean if the water does NOT bead and the surface remains wet (like in the illustration below). In other words, the water should form one single “pool” that stays together in contrast to separating into multiple drops. Unfortunately, this only works on horizontal surfaces.



FAIL – If the surface fails the wet-ability test (i.e. the water beads into multiple droplets) the surface must be cleaned again.



4. Application:

Matching wood looks is difficult. The final appearance of any product coated with GrainEx & Stain Top Coat is heavily dependant on the application methods and tools used, as well as the thickness of coating applied to the surface.

Always perform a test application first, especially if trying to replicate an existing wood look. Keep in mind that, even with the right GrainEx & Stain Top Coat colors, it may be challenging or impossible to perfectly replicate your target product's grain pattern, texture, gloss level and subtle color variations.

If for any reason you feel the coating needs to be thinned out, this can be achieved with distilled (or bottled) water. Do not add more than 5% water by volume.

4.1 Grain Creation using GrainEx:

GrainEx should be applied to the surface of the material using a sponge or brush. Then, using the graining tool of your choice, (dry sea sponge, lint free rag, cheese cloth, bristled brush, or any other desired graining tool), simply drag the desired tool across the surface. The objective is to create a random linear pattern which will serve as your grain pattern.

You can create as much or as little grain as desired. More contrast between the dark lines and white background will generate more contrast in the final result. The process is highly repeatable if the same tool is used to apply the GrainEx (see videos on web site).

Any variations within the application pattern will only add to the natural look, by creating tone variations normally seen in wood.

The open time of the GrainEx should be more than sufficient to achieve the desired effect. If the GrainEx dries prematurely for any reason, it can be wiped away in the first minutes with water or a light solvent.



Drying/Curing:

GrainEx dries quickly and the application of the Stain Top Coat should be done a few minutes later, and no more than two hours after. It is not necessary or recommended to wait for any extended curing of GrainEx to take place.

4.2 *Spraying the Stain Top Coat:*

An HVLP gun with a nozzle between 1.8 – 2.0 mm is the recommended application tool.

Other spray systems may be used as well. Please refer to your equipment manufacturer's recommended tip size for water-based coatings.

Brushing is possible, but not recommended as it makes it harder to maintain a consistent film thickness across the entire surface.

Proper lighting is important for good coverage (no shadowing). An air supply free of moisture and oil is required.



Stain Top Coat should be filtered through a cone filter strainer or mesh filter before pouring the coating into the spray equipment.

Product may be sprayed horizontally or vertically (Recommendation: if a dust free environment is not possible then spray product vertically).

The actual gun settings may vary depending on the gun being used.

The best approach to ensuring optimum settings is to spray onto a piece of cardboard and observe the spray pattern. Ideally there are no paint spots larger than the tip of a very sharp pencil, at the edges of the pattern; the paint should simply fade away gradually. Any notable “dots” indicates a problem, and you should not attempt to spray the target surface. If the spray pattern is not symmetric, the nozzle may need to be cleaned.

The goal is to darken the surface by adding very thin wet coats until the desired shade is achieved. Ensure the application is done wet as dry fume will not adhere to the surface, which can cause failure. The goal is to apply approximately 4 mils of coating (it will dry to 2 mils). This will be achieved if the surface is covered with stain top coat to the point where the surface has been wetted, i.e. observing the surface from an angle under a light source, it should look evenly wet with no dry patches and no runs. Normally 2-3 passes are sufficient to achieve a good build (the passes should be such that no running occurs).

The first pass should be an extremely light “fume” coat. This will minimize any “edge pull” from the material’s edges, thus providing more even stain coverage. Even while applying these thin coats, pay attention to the depth of color as the vinyl will darken quickly and will continue to darken as it dries.

After Top Coat application, keep the coated material in a clean, dust free environment if possible and allow to air dry. Since the products are entirely water-based, air movement is important to achieve curing, fans work well to increase air flow.

Infra-red drying or forced curing should be used only to dry the Stain Top Coat. A few minute resting period after spraying is recommended to allow any air bubbles to dissipate from the coating.

It should be obvious that excessive dust might affect the surface finish. If dust falls on the surface during the application, lightly sand and dust off the affected area and apply another coat.

CAUTION: Do not leave more than a few hours between coats (after the coat is dry), this could cause future delamination between coats.

Congratulations!

You are done!



5. Storage and disposal

Aqua-DIY GrainEx and Stain Top Coat can be stored at room temperature for up to one or two years. Ensure the containers are closed tightly. Aqua-DIY products are environmentally safe water-based coatings. No chemicals are required for cleaning or thinning, simply use water. Follow local laws and regulations for proper disposal.

6. Maintenance

Your project is now complete and its beautiful appearance can be maintained simply by washing the surface as needed with a mild soap and water mixture. Use leftover Stain Top Coat for touching up or repair of scratches.



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