



## Late Spring Seal the Deck

Sealers and stains are available at home improvement centers for about \$30 per gallon — enough to cover 250 square feet of decking. Your finish options include:

- Clear sealer that lets the wood's natural grain and color show through
- Toner that adds a bit of color but fully reveals the grain and provides some protection against sunlight (ultraviolet or UV light)
- Semi-transparent stain that tints the wood, but let's some grain show
- Solid stain and opaque color that seal weathering damage and completely cover the grain

**Expect to reapply clear sealers when required. Reapply stain finishes as needed (every other year is a good routine) using the same or a slightly darker color. Be sure to wear gloves, a safety mask, and eye protection when applying stain and sealers.**

**1. Choose a two-day period** when you'll have clear skies and moderate temperatures.

**2. Replace any missing or popped nails and screws.** Replace protruding nails with deck screws slightly longer than the nail. If a nail only slightly protrudes, you may do more harm than good

**3. Lightly sand the deck.** Use a pole sander equipped with 80-grit paper to remove any furriness caused by washing

**TIP: When pulling out the nail with a hammer or pry bar, use a scrap of wood as a fulcrum**

**for greater leverage and to avoid damaging the deck.**

**4. Apply the sealer or stain.** Use a roller to apply the sealer to the decking, covering three or four boards at a time. Use brushes and small rollers for railings, planters, and benches. Don't let the sealant dry or puddle. Two thin coats is better than one thick one.

**TIP: Deck sealants aren't required or recommended for composite decks, although some composite decking can be stained to restore its color. Be sure the product is intended for composites. Don't expect the same density of color that you would achieve with wood.**

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