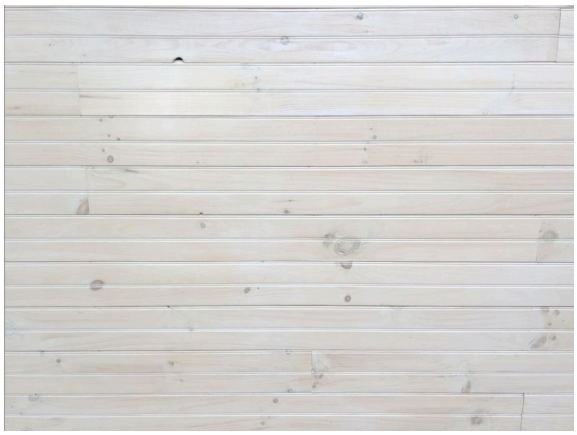
How to Whitewash Wood

Whitewash pine with a simple mix of flat white paint and water. It takes the yellow out of the wood but still lets the grain and knots show through. I used this on the tongue and groove ceiling in my workshop, and it works the same on walls, furniture or loose boards.





Tools

- [ ] Whitewash brush
- [ ] Portable scaffold or a sturdy ladder (for ceilings)
- [ ] Painter's rags, plenty of them
- [ ] Bucket and stir stick
- [ ] Painters tape
- [ ] Plastic sheeting or a drop cloth
- [ ] Safety glasses

Supplies

- [ ] Flat white paint (I used Benjamin Moore Ultra Spec 500 in flat white)
- [ ] Water
- [ ] A scrap board of the same wood for testing

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Step 1: Test on a scrap board

Before you commit, test your finish on a scrap of the same wood. I tested a lot of stains first, but darker stains looked blotchy on pine even after sanding and using a pre-stain wood conditioner. Varathane's Antique White whitewash stain looked great, but it only came in quart cans, so I made my own whitewash with paint.





Step 2: Mix the whitewash

Mix 1 part flat white paint with 1 part water. I mixed half a gallon of paint with half a gallon of water in a small bucket.

Play with the ratio on your test board until you get the look you want. Some people use paint thinner instead of water. Whatever you choose, mix the same ratio every time so every batch matches.





Step 3: Pick your technique

I tried three techniques on the same unsanded boards:

1. **Brush on, wipe off right away.** This is the one I recommend. It leaves a soft, even finish with no harsh brush strokes.
2. **Brush on, let it sit, then wipe off.** This looks good too, but the wood comes out whiter and loses some of its transparency.
3. **Brush on and leave it.** I don't recommend this one. You can see every brush mark and it doesn't finish as nicely.

With a 1:1 ratio and the first technique, there's just enough white to take out the yellow of the pine while you can still see the grain and knots.



Whitewashed boards next to unfinished pine (center) for comparison

Step 4: Prep the space

If you're whitewashing boards that are already installed, tape off light fixtures and cover anything you don't want paint on with plastic. On a ceiling, expect a lot of drips.

Tip: it's much easier to whitewash boards before you install them, as long as you have room to lay them all out while they dry.





Step 5: Apply in small sections

Brush the whitewash on and wipe it off right away with a clean rag. Switch to a fresh rag often so you're removing the excess instead of spreading it around.

Work in 5 to 6 foot sections, about 3 boards at a time, so the whitewash never sits too long before you wipe it.

Stay within the same 3 or 4 boards all the way down the length of the room. If you overlap whitewash that has already dried, you'll get white lap marks.

Work quickly down each row to keep a wet edge.





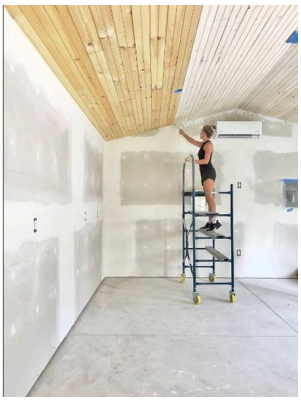




Step 6: Touch up

Once it's dry, go back over any seams you missed. I also gave some of the more yellow boards one more pass to even out the color.





More from this project

- Watch the full YouTube tutorial
- Watch how I installed the tongue and groove ceiling
- DIY Countertops Under $60 (with a whitewash finish)