

SANDING SWIRL MARKS

WHY THEY APPEAR, HOW TO FIND THEM, AND HOW TO STOP THEM



WHAT ARE SANDING SWIRL MARKS?

A random orbital sander always leaves fine scratches. A sanding swirl, sometimes called a pigtail, is one deeper scratch that remains while the scratches around it become finer. It may stay hidden



POOR SANDING GRIT PROGRESSION

Each grit replaces the deeper scratches left by the grit before it. Skipping too far ahead or moving on too soon can leave earlier scratches behind, even when the wood feels smooth. A sensible progression is 80, 120, 150, and 180 grit.



DEBRIS BEHIND THE SANDING

A small chip trapped between the sanding disc and pad can lift part of the abrasive, causing it to cut deeper and leave swirl marks. Keep removed discs off dusty surfaces and inspect both sides before



TOO MUCH SANDING PRESSURE

Pushing too hard or tilting the sander forces part of the disc to cut deeper. Keep the pad flat, use light pressure, and make slow, overlapping passes. If sanding is taking too long, step back to a coarser grit instead of pressing harder.



INSPECT FOR SANDING SWIRL MARKS

Shine a raking light across the wood at a low angle to reveal hidden scratches. If you find a swirl, step back to a coarser grit, remove it, and then work forward through the sanding progression again.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Sanding does not erase scratches. It replaces them with smaller ones. A visible swirl is one deeper scratch that survived while everything around it became finer.



THE FINAL PASS

After using your final grit with the random orbital sander, lightly hand sand with the grain using the same grit. The scratches remain, but following the grain makes them much harder to see.



**MAKE THINGS
SIMPLIFIED**



Workshop Guide

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