

## Tools for a tanner

### Frogtape

Some years ago I had to prepare a large quantity of timber samples for a book. For photography, I left one half of each piece untreated, the other varnished on the same surface, but no matter how hard I tried, it was impossible to get a bleed-free border with conventional tape. FrogTape provides a solution to this problem as it's treated with something called PaintBlock to seal the edges. If only this product had been available back then...

Apparently Paintblock is a super-absorbent polymer, which instantly gels when a water-based finish comes into contact with it, creating a micro-barrier which seals the edges of the tape. You do need to stick it down firmly, though. The makers recommend using something like a putty knife or roller to press the tape down firmly. It's also recommended that you remove it as soon as you've finished painting or varnishing.

Designed for use with emulsion paints, FrogTape is also great for water-based varnishes. Understandably, if you want to



use it with oil or solvent-based finishes it makes sense to do a trial run first.

I used FrogTape to mask the timber samples I'd treated with Enduro-VAR varnish. It worked really well, with no bleed at all. I also compared it with regular masking tape using matt emulsion paint, a contest which it won hands down.

FrogTape comes in 41m long rolls, with widths of 24mm and 36mm available. It also



comes in a plastic box, which may seem a bit of a luxury initially. But how often have you tossed a roll of tape into a toolbox, only to find it covered with fluff and other debris when you come to use it next time? This is a simple solution, which doubles as an extra storage container once the tape is finished.



**Price:** 24mm: £7.14

**36mm:** £8.16

**Shurtape UK**

**Web:** [www.frogtape.co.uk](http://www.frogtape.co.uk)

## Useful kit/product

### Enduro-VAR urethane finish

Ever struggle to get just the right amount of sheen on your completed project? You know what I mean – when a full gloss varnish or lacquer looks tacky, or matt is just too dull. The level of sheen is simply the degree of light reflection the varnish provides. Personally, I dislike a full gloss finish for most wood, but I appreciate that some love the effect; it's appropriate in some situations, sure. Somewhere between the two – a satin finish – seems a better option to me, though.

Most coating manufacturers produce acrylic varnish in both satin and gloss, one or two offering matt as well. But General Finishes seems to have covered all the bases, with four options available in its new Enduro-VAR varnish: flat (matt), satin, semi-gloss and gloss. For the scientifically-minded, this is a self cross-linking polyurethane finish.

To compare the varieties I masked off several pieces of oak, softwood and veneered board and coated them with all four finishes. Each piece had four coats applied with a

foam pad, which gave excellent results. If using a brush, synthetic bristles are best. You need at least two coats to notice any difference, preferably three, with the variation between satin and semi-gloss the most subtle. I'd be hard-pressed to choose between these two, to be honest.

Although touch dry in a few minutes, recoating is not recommended for at least two hours. Clean up is dead easy, with tap water sufficing. Unlike most water-based varnishes, Enduro-VAR gives a slight amber tint, so you may not want to use it on maple or sycamore, for example. The end result resembles an oil finish.

Suitable for spraying, General Finishes recommends VAR for use on floors, so it's tough stuff. It's an interior finish, though for outdoor use you could coat it with Exterior 450. Each finish is available in pint, quart and gallon tins.



**Price:** £15.95 per pint

**General Finishes**

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