



Make PVC Look Like Wood

by [zaphodd42](#) on July 7, 2015

Table of Contents

Make PVC Look Like Wood	1
Intro: Make PVC Look Like Wood	2
Step 1: What You'll Need.	2
Step 2: Sand The PVC.	3
Step 3: File Away!	4
Step 4: Add Some Color.	5
Step 5: Going Further... ..	6
Related Instructables	6
Advertisements	7
Comments	7



Author:zaphodd42 [author's website](#)

I live in suburban Pennsylvania with my wife and puppy. I pass the time building robots, photographing microbes and directing live TV. I enjoy learning any new skill that helps me Make! I enjoy even more passing on what I learned so others can Make as well.

Intro: Make PVC Look Like Wood

I came up with this simple trick to give PVC pipe a realistic wood texture when I built a few plastic didgeridoos a couple of years ago. It would also work for theater, home decor or backyard tiki-bars! Send an invite if you build that last one.



Step 1: What You'll Need.

- PVC, Any size you want.
- Heavy Metal File. Mine has Rasp and Double Cut sides. An 8-inch file like this costs \$9 at any hardware store.
- 100 Grit Sandpaper
- Artist Oil Paint. You can use acrylic, but it may chip off unless you seal it.

Other Materials:

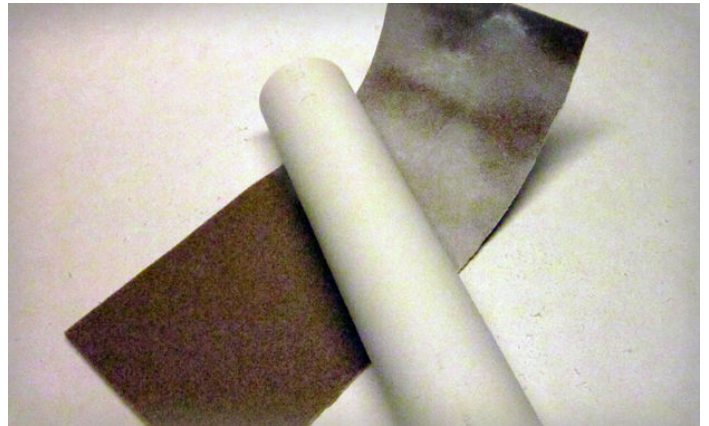
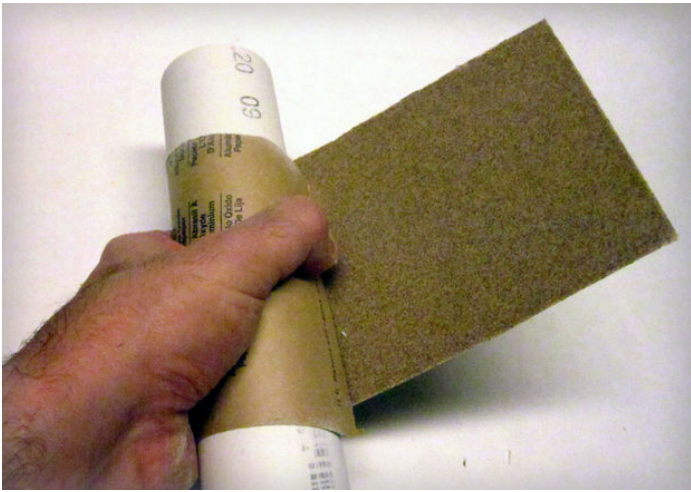
- Wire Brush, for clearing the file's teeth of PVC.
- Dust Mask, to prevent PVC dust from getting in your lungs.



Step 2: Sand The PVC.

SAFETY REMINDER: Wear a dust mask for this step!!

Remove the shiny coating and ink print on the PVC face with the sandpaper. If the Ink is giving you trouble, give IT some trouble... with acetone. Your PVC should have a nice matte finish.

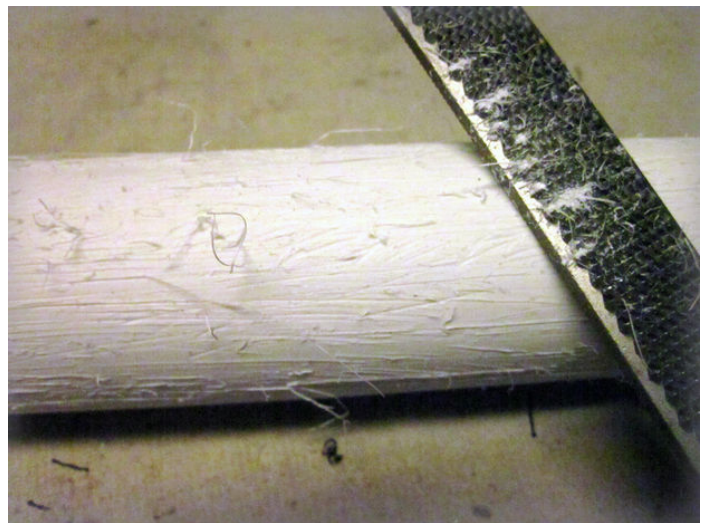
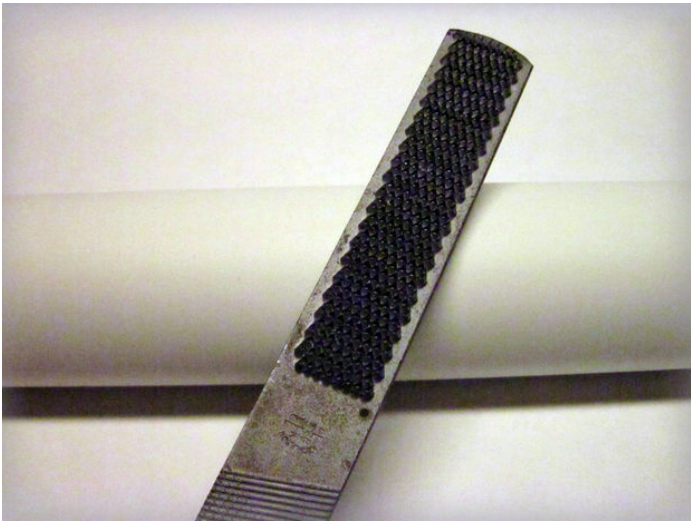


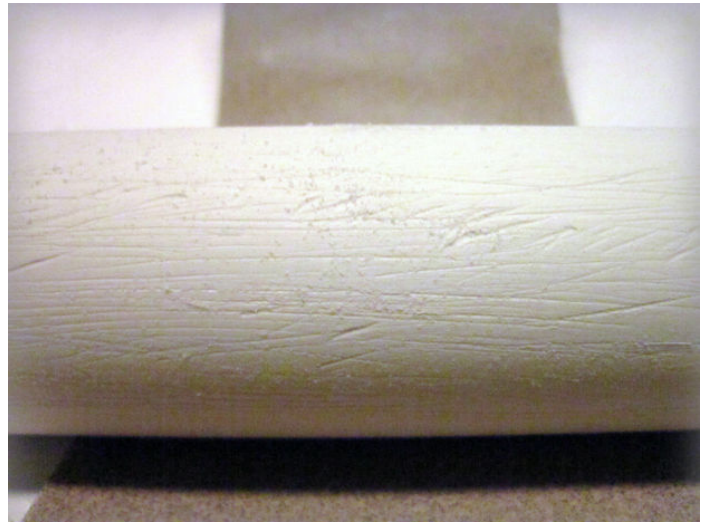
Step 3: File Away!

Use the rasp side of the file to shred the PVC surface. Pull the file in many directions to give it an organic look. If the file's teeth get clogged, use a wire brush to quickly clear them.

CAUTION: This step will make sharp ridges on the surface of the PVC. Try not to slide your knuckles along the pipe until you have smoothed it out.

Once you're happy with the texture, use the double cut (smoother side) of the file to remove the shavings and sharp ridges on the PVC. Give the plastic a few extra rubs with the sandpaper.





Step 4: Add Some Color.

Find a nice oil color you like for your PVC wood. Wipe it on with a rag, making sure to work it into all the new grooves. You can use some faux finish techniques for extra texture, blotting the paint on in irregular patterns instead of bush strokes. Let it dry. That's it!

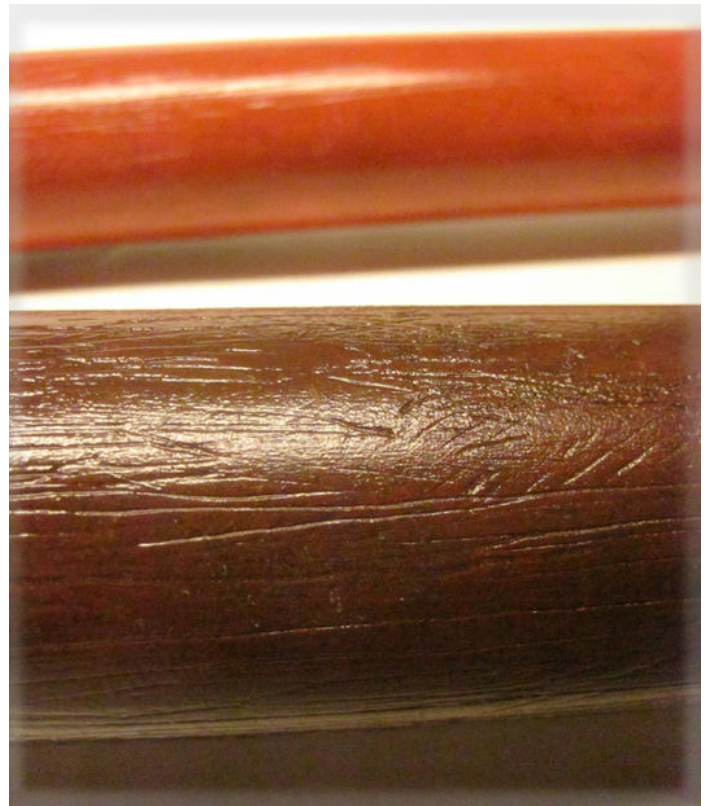




Step 5: Going Further...

As I stated above, I used this technique to make a few didgeridoos. If you like this idea, there are many Instructables on making one. You just need PVC and bees wax for a mouth piece.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Enjoy!



Related Instructables



The Ultimate didgeridoo Guide. by pedro8



Paint Realistic Faux Wood Grain by chrisorr



Improve a Simple Didgeridoo by Kunstlabor



PVC Tiki Bar by ekbruster



Didgeridoo PVC Case by Weissensteinburg




Aboriginal Instrument Spy Tool by flyingpuppy


Comments


50 comments [Add Comment](#)


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 **CourtenayS1** says: Aug 1, 2016. 9:39 PM [REPLY](#)
For the most realistic look only go end to end with the rasp unless you want the effect of distressed wood, wood damaged after construction. Wood is only milled linearly so the grain goes along the piece. Haven't a clue as to how to do knots. Also when texturing try to avoid straight lines.
Query: By oils you mean artist oils not the paint for houses?

 **TheCrowInSpats** says: Aug 1, 2016. 6:23 PM [REPLY](#)
How well/fast does the oil paint dry?

 **zaphodd42** says: Aug 1, 2016. 7:31 PM [REPLY](#)
It depends on how thick you lay it. When I shot the pics for this 'ible, the oil paint took a few days to totally dry. If you're patient, oil paint gives really good looking results and it's highly durable, it's just expensive and takes long. Others have tried wood stain, acrylic and PVC dye. All good, just different results.


 **chefspenser** says: Aug 1, 2016. 8:02 AM [REPLY](#)
Primo - thanks for clear easy instructions! Why oil paint instead to acrylic?


 **zaphodd42** says: Aug 1, 2016. 8:27 AM [REPLY](#)
You can use either! Some commenters here suggest PVC dye, wood stain or even shoe polish. All great ideas and probably much more affordable than oil paint. I used oil paint because it spreads easily on PVC and allows for more "depth of color" control. (meaning, you can control how much paint there is by wiping softer or harder - not an official term, just one I made up.) Also, as I discovered this technique for art that will be banged, moved and handled, I found acrylic to chip off and leave white spots. Oil doesn't do that, at least not easily.
Please use what ever suits your needs and feel free to share what you find.
Thanks for reading. I hope this works out for you.


 **chefspenser** says: Aug 1, 2016. 2:35 PM [REPLY](#)
Thanks for the info. Nice job.


 **smikette** says: Jul 31, 2016. 12:51 PM [REPLY](#)
this is stupendously awesome!!!!

 **zaphodd42** says: Aug 1, 2016. 8:29 AM [REPLY](#)
Thank you! My first "stupendous". :)

 **JohnS990** says: Jul 30, 2016. 2:13 PM [REPLY](#)
Quick question: how did you make the black lines I see in the photo in Step Four? Is that just the original stain color collected in the grooves, or did you apply a darker color in the grooves??

 **zaphodd42** says: Jul 30, 2016. 3:31 PM [REPLY](#)
That's just the paint collecting in the grooves! You were absolutely right! In fact, the more you try to wipe the surface paint/stain off, (leaving the groove paint behind)... the more contrast you'll get between those highs and lows. Pretty groovy, huh?
(sorry, couldn't resist.)

 **JohnS990** says: Jul 31, 2016. 10:12 AM [REPLY](#)
Hahahaha nice punny comment there, buddy. Thanks again for the great info & the quick reponse!

 **JohnS990** says: Jul 30, 2016. 4:30 PM [REPLY](#)
Hahaha nice punny comment there. Thanks for the quick reply & the solid info. Much appeesh!



zaphodd42 says:
totes.

Jul 30, 2016. 5:30 PM [REPLY](#)



lynn2828 says:
Awesome idea & great explanation--thanks so much for sharing, friend!

Jul 31, 2016. 8:20 AM [REPLY](#)



battyrubble says:
Really great idea! I have a bunch of PVC stuff at home and making it look like wood will "hide" them,
thank you!

Jul 31, 2016. 8:02 AM [REPLY](#)



Loganh89 says:
I used your Instructable to make perch branches for my arboreal snake. I used a heat tool to shape the PVC. Very helpful and great outcome. Thanks!

Jul 30, 2016. 3:23 PM [REPLY](#)



zaphodd42 says:
They look Great!!! Well done! I love seeing pics of what others did! Your python looks to enjoy it. Good job bending the PVC as well, it looks convincingly organic.
Thanks for posting!!!

Jul 30, 2016. 3:37 PM [REPLY](#)



JoanaS6 says:
Excelente idea¡¡me encanta ya lo estoy planeando para mi jardín¡ Graciassss

Jul 29, 2016. 5:12 AM [REPLY](#)



zaphodd42 says:
This idea would be great for hiding a water pipe in a garden.
Esta idea sería grande para ocultar una tubería de agua en un jardín .

Jul 29, 2016. 9:11 AM [REPLY](#)



mauriperez says:
muy buena tu idea y genial terminación, hoy voy a tratar de hacerlo. Segui compartiendo parte de tu ingenio con nosotros. FELICITACIONES!!!

Jul 28, 2016. 4:42 AM [REPLY](#)



zaphodd42 says:
Gracias. Las ideas son sólo es bueno si se puede compartirlas . Gracias por leer.

Jul 28, 2016. 9:06 AM [REPLY](#)

















barmaid56 says:
I would love a video of you going through the steps.

Jul 27, 2016. 5:12 AM [REPLY](#)



zaphodd42 says:
Hee-hee. I'll think about it, but it really wouldn't teach you anything different. It's pretty strait forward. I do love watching videos over photos as well. But there's no real "method" here. If you would like a more discriptive proceedure of some steps, I'd be happy to help.

Jul 27, 2016. 10:38 PM [REPLY](#)

-
-  **AJLM** says:
Brilliant! Jul 26, 2016. 9:16 AM [REPLY](#)
-
-  **zaphodd42** says:
Thanx! Jul 27, 2016. 10:35 PM [REPLY](#)
-
-  **559maryg** says:
Love it..... My mind is going wild with ideas for this project...fabulous! Jul 26, 2016. 5:45 AM [REPLY](#)
-
-  **zaphodd42** says:
Thank you. Jul 27, 2016. 10:35 PM [REPLY](#)
-
-  **Bliss Grey** says:
This is the cleverest post I've seen on Instructables! Thanks. Jul 25, 2016. 5:03 PM [REPLY](#)
-
-  **zaphodd42** says:
Wow! Gee! Thank you! I'm glad you liked it. Jul 25, 2016. 5:16 PM [REPLY](#)
-
-  **blacketier** says:
They also make a matte clear coat spray paint if you want the clear coat but don't want the shinny look. Jul 24, 2016. 11:00 AM [REPLY](#)
-
-  **pammiller** says:
Clever, Thanks for sharing. Now I just need to figure out where I need this. Jul 24, 2016. 8:57 AM [REPLY](#)
-
-  **zaphodd42** says:
Well... there are currently 458 comments of great ideas by clever people. It;s some good summer reading!! :) hee-hee. Thanks!!! Jul 24, 2016. 9:08 AM [REPLY](#)
-
- bchurchman** says:
What about UV stability? Coat with varnish? Jul 24, 2016. 5:34 AM [REPLY](#)
-
-  **zaphodd42** says:
I spray a clear coat. It shines up the art and yes, protects from UV... if you want the PVC to be outside. Jul 24, 2016. 9:06 AM [REPLY](#)
-
- whabib** says:
Simple and practicably Great idea. Must get started now. Thank you Jul 23, 2016. 6:29 AM [REPLY](#)
-
-  **zaphodd42** says:
My pleasure. Thanks for reading! Jul 23, 2016. 6:03 PM [REPLY](#)
-
-  **Molly35** says:
What a cool way for me to update my dust collector system which is 80% PVC.
Hey its a woodworking shop, why not right? Jul 22, 2016. 7:50 PM [REPLY](#)
-
-  **zaphodd42** says:
You're not the first to suggest this exact idea. (No offense, it's a GREAT idea!!) I'd love to see it in action! Please!!!! Jul 22, 2016. 9:28 PM [REPLY](#)
-
-  **LauraF99** says:
This looks great! I want to know, will painting/staining it affect its ability to fit in a coupling? Should I only sand/file/paint the parts that *arent* in a coupling?
Does it really matter? Am I gonna have to get off my backside and find out for myself? Jul 22, 2016. 5:34 PM [REPLY](#)
-



zaphodd42 says:

It really shouldn't, as long as.. like you said... sand the PVC in contact with the coupling. I have painted PVC for use in couplings before. I paint first, then sand till it fits, then touch up around the edge for a smooth transition. I have not used this effect on couplings FYI, but I'm sure it would come out the same, just a little more effort needed. Thanx for reading!!

Jul 22, 2016. 9:26 PM [REPLY](#)



Lyman Bruce says:

This is a great idea for creating stage props.

Thanks, Mr. Beeblebrox!

Jun 16, 2016. 6:33 AM [REPLY](#)



FSQ says:

You guys are hilarious AND awesome!

Jul 21, 2016. 12:21 PM [REPLY](#)



ChuckieBob58 says:

You are not THE Zaphod Beeblebrox? The Zaphod Beeblebrox that stole the Heart of Gold?

Jun 16, 2016. 6:45 AM [REPLY](#)



maewert says:

Vell, Zaphod's just zis guy, you know?

Jun 16, 2016. 7:08 AM [REPLY](#)



zaphodd42 says:

so you sass that hoopy zaphod? good!

Jun 16, 2016. 7:48 AM [REPLY](#)

astein3 says:

He's one frood who really knows where his towel is!
(And he dooes a nice job "naturing" the PVC, too!)

Jun 16, 2016. 9:45 PM [REPLY](#)



zaphodd42 says:

Dudes, I'd love to agrue with you but I have an arcturan megafreighter crew to distract, a Pan Galactic Gargle Blaster to finish and this peice of angel food cake to eat.

Jun 16, 2016. 7:47 AM [REPLY](#)



ERNesbitt says:

I used a similar technique a couple of years ago to make the frame for a backpack for a stage production (I was Patsy in Spamalot). I used light coats of multiple colors of spraypaint instead of oil paint then antiqued it with brown and black liquid acrylic. Some "advanced" techniques: Use a heat gun to soften the PVC and bend it slightly, hold in place until cool. Create kinks and curves to give it a more natural feel; hot glue "knots" in the kinked areas; and drag the side of the glue gun nozzle to create raised and uneven "barky" textures. Paint, antique, assemble, lights, camera, action. PVC is a nice substitute for wood props on stage because it's a heck of a lot lighter.

Jun 16, 2016. 8:14 AM [REPLY](#)



zaphodd42 says:

Oh Patsy! You shall not have been... mortally wounded in vain!! That backpack looks great!! I "rotisserie" the PVC over my gas oven to soften it and bend it ever so slightly!! But I love the hot glue idea!!!! Thank you!

Jun 16, 2016. 9:17 AM [REPLY](#)



TedN7 says:

Jul 20, 2016. 12:45 PM [REPLY](#)

Love this idea. I wonder what it would look like to take one or two pieces of wood dowel, cut appropriate size holes in the main PVC pipe and fit the dowels deep into the pipe and cut them off close to the pipe, then them in place with PVC glue. Finally cut and sand them off even with the PVC, (or leave them 1/8' or so sticking out) to create a make believe knot or branches. (can you tell I have to much time on my hands?)

[view all 476 comments](#)