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Subject: Re: Natural with Varnish for a warm look  
Posted by [Bill Martinelli](#) on Mon, 30 Jun 2003 13:04:48 GMT  
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As Matts describes Birch does not always take stain as well as you would like. I should first say that a lot of people choose birch and finish it naturally because they are looking for a light tone wood. Oil base stains will be problematic on birch since they are penetrating by nature. The Gel Stains, are a topical treatment much more so than a penetrating stain. This will work much better for a hard tight grained wood like birch or maple. If you have a high figure wood then you want a penetrating stain so that it does in fact penetrate the figure unevenly, this will accentuate the figure content dramatically. These are NGR stains and dyes. (non grain raising) These are generally more of a professional group because the application of an NGR takes a little practice. Usually an alcohol base where the open time is nil. This allows you almost no time for overlapping in a wipe method to be wiped off. This kind of stain is better to be sprayed on where an even coat can be applied. Also more prevalent in furniture finishing would be to spray dye's and pigments between coats of finish. This is commonly called a toner when we do this. I think Bill Epstein has some good tricks for getting an even color coat with NGR's. I finish birch naturally or spray a toner for best results. Bill