TIMBERBITS

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# THIN CA FINISHING GUIDE

FOR PEN MAKERS – TIMBERBITS METHOD

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## OVERVIEW

A thin CA (cyanoacrylate) finish is a durable, high-gloss coating applied to your pen blank while turning. When done correctly, it provides a professional look and long-lasting protection against wear. This guide walks you through the full process, including preparation, application, polishing, and common troubleshooting tips.

## TOOLS & MATERIALS NEEDED

- **Lathe** – variable speed
- **Nylon bushes** – to prevent glue from sticking to standard bushes
- **Thin CA glue** – for finish coats
- **CA activator** – aerosol preferred for even application
- **Paper towel** – for spreading CA glue
- **Abrasives** – 150–600 grit for prep sanding
- **Micro Mesh sanding kit** – 1,500–12,000 grit
- **Water trough or spray bottle** – for wet sanding
- **Protective covering** – scrap wood or ply to shield your lathe from glue

## PREPARATION

1. **Protect Your Lathe** – Cover with scrap wood/ply to avoid CA overspray.
2. **Fit Nylon Bushes** – These stop glue bonding to your bushes and make removal easier.
3. **Mount the Pen Blank** – Secure on the mandrel with bushings, ready for finishing.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

**Lathe Speed:** 200 RPM for application.

1. **Apply First Coat**
   - Place a small amount (a couple of drops) of thin CA onto folded paper towel.
   - Spread evenly across the blank while lathe spins slowly.
2. **Set the Coat**
   - Lightly spray an aerosol activator from a distance to speed up curing and prevent bubbles.
3. **Repeat**
   - Continue applying and setting coats until you reach ~20 coats.
   - More coats provide a deeper finish and protect against sanding through to bare timber.

## POLISHING PROCESS

**Lathe Speed:** Increase to ~700 RPM for sanding/polishing.

**1. Initial Cut-Back**

- Use your first micro mesh pad to level any uneven spots.
- Wet the pad for lubrication and dip frequently during sanding

**2.Progress Through Grits**

- Work from 1,500 up to 12,000 grit micro mesh.
- Do not skip grits — remove all scratches from the previous grit before moving on.

**3.Final Buff**

- Continue until you achieve a smooth, high-gloss surface.

## FAQ – TOP 5 COMMON QUESTIONS

**1. How do I stop the finish from coming off during assembly?**

Sand the ends of the blanks lightly with your abrasive before assembly to remove overhanging CA that can separate from timber under pressure.

**2. How many coats should I apply?**

We recommend ~20 coats for depth and protection.

**3. Do I need activator?**

Not strictly, but it makes life easier — prevents bubbles, speeds curing, and avoids smearing. Use aerosol for an even coat (pump sprays may leave white dots).

**4. How do I stop glue on my bushes?**

Use nylon bushes or carefully cut the finish from the bushes with a knife before removing.

**5. What sanding grits should I use?**

- Before CA application: 150 → 600 grit
- After CA application: Micro mesh 1,500 → 12,000 grit, all steps in sequence.

## PRO TIPS

- Keep activator sprays 15–20 cm away to avoid over-wetting the surface.
- Wipe CA on in a single, smooth pass — avoid stopping mid-rotation.
- Rotate paper towel after each coat to prevent glue buildup.
- Always wet sand with micro mesh to avoid heat build-up and scratching.